

8 Boundary Work: Sculpting Home and Work

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In general “boundary work” consists of the strategies, principles, and practices we use to create, maintain, and modify cultural categories. I focus on a specific case of boundary work: the process through which we organize potentially realm-specific matters, people, objects, and aspects of self into “home” and “work,” maintaining and changing these conceptualizations as needed and/or desired. Through boundary work, we impose our views of “home,” “work,” and their relationship on a fairly malleable world of possibilities.

Boundary work is first and foremost a mental activity, but it must be enacted and enhanced through a largely visible collection of essential, practical activities. It is this physical side of boundary work (e.g., wearing different or similar clothes at home and work; using “personal” money for “work” expenses, or not; listing work and home engagements on the same or different calendars; having co-workers over for dinner, or not; bringing children to the workplace, or not; putting a family photo on one’s desk or colleagues’ pictures on the fireplace mantel, or not; changing clothes upon arriving home each day, or not; consuming differently drugged drinks in the morning and evening, or not) that helps us tangibly reinforce and even challenge cognitive and situational distinctions between “home” and “work.”

Accordingly, boundary work is the key process that reflects and helps determine how much we integrate/segment home and work. It is what ultimately allows each of us to repeatedly define and refine the essence of and relationship between our home and work realms – what is unique to each place and what is shared between them. It is the process that lets us create, challenge, defend and change categories of social existence within the mental and structural constraints of that existence.

There are two kinds of boundary work. The first focuses on boundary placement. The second focuses on boundary transcendence. Both are essential to place and maintain boundaries. The former more visibly draws the line between realms and the latter helps keep it in place by allowing us to jump back and forth over it. The activities associated with both forms may be continually adjusted to accommodate different conceptualizations of these realms.

Both forms of boundary work are affected by and reflected in three components: (1) the degree to which the people of either realm overlap, (2) the degree to which the objects (ranging from task-specific “tools,” in the most general sense of the word, to decorations) and ambiance of surroundings are similar/different; and (3) the degree to which we think, act, and present ourselves in either realm in similar/different ways

Of course, what we do along one of these fronts is often heavily influenced in the same integrating or segmenting direction by the same factors that guide our actions along other fronts. Nevertheless, any one of us might be highly segmenting in how

we manage the people of both realms, extremely integrating via the inanimate objects of both realms, and more in the middle ranges in how we manage our appearance, talk styles, and eating habits. One's position along the continuum at a certain time is a composite, a summation of how one manages each of these broad components and their multiple dimensions.

For example, Irene is a scientist who engages in wage labor work at home at almost any time of the day or night. She has similar reading materials, computers, telephones, artwork, writing supplies, lights, and furniture in her workplace and home offices. She regularly brings her children into institutional workspace, entertains mostly colleagues at home, and is married to her collaborator.... [T]hese strategies place Irene toward the integration pole of the continuum.

Yet Irene also maintains numerous pockets of privacy, reflecting more selective distinctions between "home" and "work." These distinctions are encouraged simply because she possesses a separate workplace and residence. In addition, she does certain work and leisure and domestic activities only at home, while others occur only at the work place. Only her spouse is privy to certain thoughts and behavior. Only family attends certain social functions. Certain workmates are engaged only outside the home. These more segmenting distinctions offset her more integrating influences and practices and keep Irene from approaching the integration pole more closely.

Sal is a machinist who also has a policy about mixing "home" and "work," but his efforts... are designed to keep them separate. He never brings coworkers or wage labor tasks home, and he strictly adheres to a 7:30 to 4:30 workday, Monday through Friday. There are no common objects between his home and his workplace except himself, his lunch box, his underwear, and his jeans. (He wears different shoes and shirts in both places, even keeping his home and work shirts in separate drawers at home.)

Yet Sal makes and receives personal phone calls at work. He occasionally shares bits of more impersonal information between coworkers and family and attends colleagues' retirement parties and the funerals of their relatives. He brings the family to an annual workplace picnic and has a family portrait hanging at his workspace. So, while Sal is far more segmenting than Irene, he too falls short of an extreme type, some practices off-setting the segmenting effects of others.

Integrating through these three components presents three possibilities in terms of the direction of integration. First, we may create an overall effect in which "work" is heavily infused with elements conventionally associated with "home." Or we may heavily infuse "home" with the traditional elements of "work." Or, of course, we may obtain a fairly even balance in our integrating efforts, interweaving both realms with ways of being, people, activities, and artifacts commonly associated with another realm.

The amount of discretion we have for personal boundary work is a most important constraint on the direction and forms of our integration. For reasons I discuss later, the discretion to infuse work with home-related elements is often much less than the discretion to infuse or absorb home with work. Nonetheless, theoretically, and for some people even practically, the integrating of realms may be a fairly well-balanced endeavor, or one in which *either* side of the commute claims more turf from the other.

Wherever we currently fall along the continuum, however, we use, different practices in many different ways to create, preserve and change the experiential categories of "home" and "work." The process is like sculpting. In its classical, artistic sense, sculpting is an activity in which boundaries are physically imposed on matter, creating new forms and evoking new interpretations of raw material in the process. If an artist is working with stone, for instance, she carves out negative and positive spaces, defining each from and with the other, to form a new, critically interrelated whole. Hence, the sculptor's activity is a kind of "boundary work," in which matter is envisioned, divided up, and related to itself with virtually endless possibilities. This boundary work transforms relatively undifferentiated material into artificial, socially embedded "works of art."

Delineating and relating the concepts "home" and "work" is similarly a mental and physical sculpting process, and it too can result in endless different experiences. Consider a raw chunk of stone that represents all the items potentially divided into "home" and "work": people, objects, activities, even ways of thinking and being. Like the marble worker whose creations emerge from undifferentiated lumps, each of us must mentally carve out our own categories and relationships of "home" and "work" from an otherwise amorphous social existence. The process is embedded in the systems of cultural concepts and demands we are born into, as well as those we consciously choose or are forced to embrace later on. These ideas are reflected and modified through the tangible, physical side of boundary work, like the presence or absence of phone calls from home while at work, talking about work with one's family, using a briefcase or computer modem to bring personal reading materials and children's fund-raising forms to work or wage work to home, or carrying bag lunches from home to work.

In the extremely segmented approach to home and work, material is purposefully transformed into two distinct categories, "home" and "work" (i.e., negative and positive space), each inversely defining the other. The fully integrated "home-work" category lacks further internal boundaries, though, remaining an undifferentiated lump. It is enacted through people, objects, activities, and a self that are utterly interchangeable across time and space. It pointedly resists subdividing matter into "negative" and "positive" space.

At some point, however, the sculptor's job turns from the placement of boundaries to their maintenance. He must stop chiseling, stop imposing new variations on the boundary between negative and positive space. At first, he does this sequentially, perhaps repeatedly returning and adjusting what he's done in some places, while leaving others alone. Eventually, though, he must do whatever is necessary in order to uphold all of what he's done, allowing the boundaries to exist as a particular, final arrangement of negative and positive space. To maintain this boundary, he might sell the sculpture, so he's not tempted to keep tapping away forever. He might make sure that another chunk of stone will be ready to go, diverting his energy from the old to the new. He may (re)train himself to simply accept the ways these particular negative and positive spaces join at each juncture. Whatever it takes, this, too, is part of the work the sculptor must do in order for the work to exist.

In the same way, home-work negotiators must turn to different forms of boundary work whenever we are, or must be, satisfied with the boundary we've imposed. Whenever we finish with the work of *placing* the boundary, we must turn to the

work of *transcending* it. Rather than continuing to chisel away, we work on making transitions between realms, in order to preserve both "home" and "work" as they currently exist. . . .

Of course, any sculptor faces certain constraints, so that often unseen influences limit how she approaches, fashions, and leaves each stone. Creating a work of art is not simply a matter of exercising personal choice or "free will." Many constraints take the form of social expectations about what is culturally meaningful to both artist and audience and what sculpting is all about: what should the process be like and what kind of an outcome should we expect. The thoughts of the sculptor's teachers and commissioners will be especially important to her regarding cultural, conceptual issues of what "works of art" look like and how they are made. Other constraints are much more tangible, like the shape and physical characteristics of the stone, the tools the artist has to shape it, the dimensions of her studio, and how much and how soon she's relying on the income a work might generate.

Because of these constraints, some choices are already made for the artist before he even begins his work, especially choices about what the stone will *not* become. These choices are largely made at the unconscious level, reflecting the fact that boundary work occurs here, according to internalized principles, as well as at a more conscious level. The sculptor embraces some options yet does not even consider others. (This may be, as Steven Lukes argues, the most insidious form of social control.) Social, cognitive constraints thus manifest in personal experience, imagination, and others' expectations. This makes boundary work both visible and invisible, conscious and unconscious.

Accordingly, while there is plenty of room for personal innovation in sculpting, the most basic rules that guide the sculptor's hand are predetermined and virtually impossible to ignore. These rules may be so fundamental that they are taken for granted; only the most systematic exploration uncovers them. Like a good cook, experimental scientist, or home-work negotiator, a sculptor takes her mental constraints and the physical resources at hand and produces a wonderfully synergistic result. And, as is the case with these other people, the end product causes the sculptor to reflect back on the concepts, understandings, techniques, and material situations that originally guided her hand. Through her practical sculpting activity and the artifact it produces, new light is shed on the way she sees these things, the importance they have for her work, and the way she might negotiate them next time.

Likewise, sociocognitive and social-structural constraints abound for us as we practically negotiate the meaning of "home," "work," and their "proper" relationship. First of all, individual thinking is nothing less than the embodiment of group thinking. This is the common thread of the works of Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Karl Marx, Alfred Schutz, Schutz and Thomas Luckmann, Peter Berger and Luckmann, Michel Foucault, Karl Mannheim, Ludwig Fleck, and Thomas Kuhn, for instance. All students of philosophy and the sociology of knowledge and science, they note the primacy of the social group for personal thought. "Worldviews," "thoughtstyles," "paradigms," "class consciousness," etcetera, shape any individual's conceptual framework.

Hence, one person's conceptualization of "home" and "work" and their proper relationship is predicated on cultural understandings of these terms. But, as Durkheim reminds us, while cultural constructs precede and inform personal ones,

personal ones are never the mere embodiments of social ones. Raymond Williams explicitly argues that the perpetuation of a multiplicity of meanings for cultural concepts is a result of variations in personal experience. A concept must be commensurate with a person's experience for her or him to cognitively embrace it, in whole or in part. This mutually constraining effect results in cultural categories like "home" and "work" that inform and are informed by personal experience.

In addition to more mental, conceptual social constraints, more readily apparent social factors influence what each of us can understand home and work to be, as well as what we can shape them to look like. For instance, just as a sculptor's teacher encourages him to chisel in a certain way, so do spouses' and children's demands influence the way we divide our time between wage and domestic work. If an artistic school of thought leads the sculptor to envision a piece in a certain way, so too do a work group's expectations guide the home-work negotiator. For instance, formal and informal workplace rules about making "personal" phone calls, taking "personal" breaks, and using "work" equipment, materials, and money for "personal" reasons undoubtedly shape the way we distinguish between home and work. The size of a studio limits the dimensions of a sculptor's work of art, just as workplace danger may prohibit the otherwise integrating presence of children or spouses. An artist may not have enough money to buy better tools or study with a more eminent teacher, which would allow him to change his understanding of sculpture. Similarly, the single mother living on her wages and possessing few marketable skills may not have the chance to move beyond her present boss's boundary expectations, whatever they are. Even cultural norms about things like the ideal relationship between parents and children and the forms of day care that should be available shape possible juxtapositions of home and work.

The process of socialization regarding what "home" and "work" mean starts with models presented during childhood. As we grow, our own employment and education experiences provide confirmation or alternatives to these ideas. Soon, spouses', employers', and coworkers' expectations – even children's demands – are crucial in shaping our decisions of what can and will belong to each sphere, or even if there will be two spheres. These classificatory negotiations largely result from expectations about how and why one does certain kinds of wage and domestic work, and the kinds of family, work group, and daily lives we and significant others desire and require of ourselves.

As a result of these factors, for instance, the occupations of university professor, diplomat, family business owner, cleric, and medical doctor and those in cottage industries push members toward the integration end of the spectrum. So do the home-related constraints of people married to coworkers or highly wage work-supportive spouses. Part-time cashiers, insurance claim processors, construction laborers, and "job shop" machinists, however, are examples of occupations that tend to make us segment home and work more. So do the constraints of new parents, those who do most of the daily domestic work, and those whose spouses steadfastly insist that we draw the home-work line at the front doorstep.

Sociologically, the home-work boundary varies for any given person largely according to expectations associated with the following: occupation, work organization, work group, and hierarchical position held within these, gender, family structure, spouse's wage work, one's parenting role, and domestic labor role. Each

of these social statuses encapsulates historical, cultural norms about the meaning of home and work, the kinds of activities and ways of being each entails, and the ways each "kind" of person should experience these realms. These normative guidelines are part of what we internalize during our lifelong socialization in making classificatory distinctions.

Furthermore, any individual negotiates these statuses within specific physical environments. The selves, roles and activities institutionally and personally associated with certain statuses are carried out within the real world. A laboratory feels very different from a living room, while a powerful administrator's office may be quite similar to it. Thus, physical, ambient conditions also constrain the way we experience either realm and the extent to which we perceive differences between them.

Change in these statuses, the activities associated with them or the environments in which they are carried out is thus likely to bring about change in the way someone categorizes and experiences "home" and "work." This is because these changes frequently invoke new, modified understandings of what home and work mean. They may also change the available ways in which we may carry out these understandings. . . .

[E]ach of us responds to changing constraints on the ways we see and experience home and work. If a sculptor's arthritis causes him to abandon certain forms of stone working, so may the onset of a parent's or child's terminal or chronic illness cause us to become more segmentist in the interweaving of our home and work. Or, bosses and family permitting, our own illness may promote a more flexible approach to the time and space of both realms, as we try to work and recuperate simultaneously. The adoption of workplace policies like flex-time and flex-place can offer far more integrating possibilities. The sudden institution of bureaucratic workplace policies, however, encourages a more segmentist approach to home and work, demanding that we remove "personal" items and activities from workspace and time. A promotion to management may mean expectations of greater investment of self in work. It may require and promote more thinking about work while at home, more extra-workplace socializing with coworkers and more business travel. A new job in a work group with fairly segmentist expectations, though, can lead us to become more segmenting, as people repeatedly refuse invitations to chat about domestic matters or socialize "on the outside." On the other hand, a likable coworker's enthusiasm can just as easily rope us into playing on a departmental softball or bowling team, extending our relationships with coworkers into the physical and social space and time outside the workplace proper. Likewise, marriage to a spouse who positively throws herself into furthering our career by networking, entertaining, and typing on our behalf may greatly increase a previous level of integration.

Over time, certain realm and boundary expectations and ambient conditions generally hold constant. But new expectations and physical arrangements demand or allow us to change home and work arrangements beyond our previous conceptualizations. We abandon or adopt specific segmenting and integrating practices along numerous dimensions as needed and desired. At the same time, these new practices react back on the social influences that give rise to them, causing us to modify both our visions of "home" and "work" and the temporal and spatial territories they previously encompassed.

Sometimes the change in our home-work configurations will be quite radical. Other times it will be more of a fine-tuning of present configurations. It depends on the changes we experience and how severely these test and constrain the previous conceptual framework and practical ways of distinguishing between home and work.

Of course, while boundary work is firmly and consistently embedded in the social structure, it also allows for discretion in personal responses to these constraints. For example, if it is not required in our job descriptions, we must still decide if we will have nothing to do with our colleagues outside the workplace and workday. Will we socialize with them in a neutral, social place like a softball field or a restaurant? Will we invite them into our homes? How often and for what kinds of occasions? And if we make a decision about these things today, what will we do tomorrow, if a new, quite likable colleague joins the department or our marriage hits a low point?

Boundary work thus gives us room for personal innovation as well as the accommodation of cultural and sociostructural expectations. It allows us to constantly modify our understandings and experiences of home and work, providing an important link between self and society, what is personal and cultural. In this respect, the home-work negotiator is no different from the artistic sculptor, whose work links him and his unique propensity for creation with the rest of the art community.

Thus, each person may move in any direction along the continuum, reflecting the new ways she or he is asked by others and herself or himself to perceive and enact "home" and "work." Integration and segmentation are not personality types. They are typifications of the ways we classify and juxtapose items, acts, thoughts, and aspects of self to accommodate social and personal expectations.

For a given person, however, there may well be differing levels of social-psychological comfort with certain positions on the continuum. Yet that comfort is more a function of two situational factors. First, how closely are we allowed by others to enact our socialized views about the "proper" relationship between home and work? Second, how well can we muster the resources that allow us to adjust when we're forced to abandon old views and adopt new ones?

For instance, Didi grew up as an important presence in her parents' prestigious family business. In its purest form, the presence of family and business were inseparable in this social unit, whether its members were at home or the office. Now a wife and mother of two, Didi still helps run the company. Her husband, however, shares no such integrated background. Despite a highly lucrative, professional career and long hours at work, he is far more segmentist in his views, as are his colleagues. He is quickly annoyed if even the smallest amount of paperwork from Didi's job lays on the living room coffee table. Alan firmly believes that when she's at home, Didi should do only "home" things. Of course, throughout Didi's childhood, "home" things included "work" things and vice versa. The definition of "home" things was an early and continuous point of contention for this couple.

Didi now finds she is more segmentist too, a result of the births of her two children within one year, her acceptance of most of the family's domestic and child-related work, and the desire to dedicate their small amount of shared time to family activities. She still "sneaks in" a little "wage work" in the evenings, however, after the kids are in bed. Through evening thoughts, paperwork, and phone calls, Didi retains some of her old ideas about home, work, and their relationship. At the same

time, she's adopted some new practices to handle the changes in her personal situation and in what "home" and "work" mean to her and those around her.

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Editor's Notes on Further Reading

Nippert-Eng on Boundary Work

Christena Nippert-Eng investigates the complicated meaning-making behind the apparently simple cognitive categories of "home" and "work." Her book, based on an intensive study of 72 workers in a large scientific institution, elaborates the mundane symbolic markers creating these categories, the processes of moving between realms, and the influences on how much people integrate work and home. The research sparked widespread public discussion when it first appeared because it offered a new perspective on topics like gender and work, telecommuting, and contemporary work organization. On culture and work organization see also Kunda, this volume, and associated editor's note; for a cultural analysis of the home see Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981). On the particularly intense issues of home/work boundaries for family women, see for example Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Second Shift* (New York: Avon Books, 1997) and Sharon Hays, *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), pp. 145–78.

More generally, Nippert-Eng contributes to the theory of symbolic boundaries, which has its origins in the classical sociological concern with social classification (e.g. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen Fields (New York: Free Press, 1995), pp. 8–18). In recent years, cognitive categories and symbolic boundaries (rather than values or attitudes) have been seen by many cultural sociologists as the key elements of culture. On symbolic boundaries see, for example, excerpts from work by Lamont and Bryson, this volume and Michèle Lamont and Marcel Fournier, eds., *Cultivating Differences: Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of Inequality* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Cynthia Fuchs Epstein, *Deceptive Distinctions: Sex, Gender, and the Social Order* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, and New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1988); Judith Gerson and Kathy Peiss, "Boundaries, Negotiation, Consciousness: Reconceptualizing Gender Relations," *Social Problems* 32 (1985): 317–31; and Thomas Gieryn, "Boundary Work and the Demarcation of Science from Non-Science: Strains and Interests in Professional Ideologies of Scientists," *American Sociological Review* 48 (1983): 781–95. On cognitive categories see Zerubavel, this volume, and the accompanying notes.

Nippert-Eng also emphasizes the active and creation and re-creation of cognitive categories in "boundary work"; she pays attention to individual agency and processes of cultural construction, as well as the more static, transindividual analysis of cultural categories, and in doing so links cultural analysis to the symbolic interactionist tradition in sociology. See, for instance, Howard Becker and Michal McCall, eds., *Symbolic Interaction and Cultural Studies* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990), especially John Hall, "Social Interaction, Culture, and Historical Studies," pp 16–45; Norman Denzin, *Symbolic Interaction and Cultural Studies* (Cambridge, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), and Gary Alan Fine and Sherryl Kleinman, "Network and Meaning: An Interactionist Approach to Structure," *Symbolic Interaction* 6 (1983): 97–110.

9 Corporate Culture

Gideon Kunda

Tech Culture: A Managerial Perspective

On this randomly selected workday, the Lyndsville engineering facility is the stage upon which practical managerial concerns with "the culture" are acted out. A few miles away, in a fairly spacious but still modest office at Tech's corporate headquarters, Dave Carpenter is preparing a presentation to be given at Lyndsville later in the day. He is one of the more senior managers in the Engineering Division, and has been with the company a long time. Like many Tech managers, Dave Carpenter works extremely hard. He has recently gone on a strictly enforced seven-to-seven schedule that includes working breakfasts and dinners, but it is still difficult to get onto his calendar. He has just finished a series of long-scheduled "one-on-ones." The last one was with a Harvard professor wearing a fancy business suit and a prominently displayed visitor's badge, who has just been ushered out after exactly half an hour. ("Some kind of case study interview - culture and productivity; everybody wants to know what we're up to.") Dave has a few minutes to get his presentation together. The group at Lyndsville has recently been made part of his organization - "his world" - in one of the frequent reorganizations that are a way of life for Tech managers, or, as he would say, "a part of the culture."

For Dave, as for many managers, cultural matters are an explicit concern. Dave considers himself an expert. One wall of his office is covered with a large bookcase holding many managerial texts. Japanese management, in particular, intrigues him, and books on the subject take up a whole shelf. ("They know something about putting people to work - and we better find out what it is.") Dave has a clear view of what the culture is all about and considers it his job not only to understand, but to influence and shape it for those whose performance he believes to be his responsibility.

A key aspect of Tech culture, Dave often points out, is that formal structure tells you nothing. Lyndsville is a case in point. "It's typical Tech. The guys up there are independent and ambitious. They are working on state-of-the-art stuff - really neat things. Everyone, including the president, has a finger in the pot. The group is potentially a revenue generator. That they are committed there is no doubt. But they are unmanageable." How then, he wonders, can he make them see the light? Work in the *company's* interest? Cooperate? Stop (or at least channel) the pissing contests? And not make him look bad? Dave knows that whether he controls it or not, he "owns" it - another aspect of the culture. And as he reads the company, his own future can be influenced by the degree to which he is credited with the group's success. And he is being watched, just as he watches others. His strategy is clear. "Power plays don't work. You can't *make 'em* do *anything*. They have to *want* to. So you have to work through the culture. The idea is to educate people without them knowing it. Have the religion and not know how they ever got it!"

And there are ways to do this. Today Dave will make his first appearance at Lyndsville. He will give a presentation about the role of Lyndsville's various technical projects in Tech's long-term business strategy. "Presentations are important in this culture," he says. "You have to get around, give them the religion, get the message out. It's a mechanism for transmitting the culture." Sending and interpreting "messages" are a key to working the culture. Dave is clear about what he wants to accomplish: generate some enthusiasm, let them work off some steam, celebrate some of the successes, show them that they are not out on their own, make his presence felt. And maybe give them an example of the right "mindset." In "the trenches" (a favorite expression), he is sure, there must be considerable confusion caused by "the revolving door" - the frequent changes of management. Lyndsville reputedly has quite a few good and committed people. It is a creative group. But it is also considered a tough, competitive environment. Some say it reminds them of the early days of Tech, when commitment and burnout went hand in hand. Perhaps. The company has been changing. But some things stay the same. Dave remembers life in the trenches. He was "there" years ago, he has paid his dues - including a divorce - and he still feels an affinity for the residents of the trenches, some of whom he will meet today. And, as always, he is prepared. He reaches for the tools of the culture trade - the "road show" color slides used at yesterday's strategy presentation to the executive committee - and selects the ones for today.

Concern with the culture is not just the domain of senior managers; it has also spawned a small internal industry that translates global concerns, ideas, and messages into daily activities. Near the front lobby of the Lyndsville building, a large conference room is being prepared for more routine "cultural shaping." Alone in the room, Ellen Cohen is getting ready to run her "Culture Module" for the "Introduction to Tech" workshop for new hires, also known as "bootcamp." It will take two hours, and if everything runs smoothly, she will stay for Dave Carpenter's presentation. ("It's a must for Tech-watchers. You can learn a lot from attending.") She is an engineer who is now "totally into culture." Over the last few years she has become the resident "culture expert." "I got burnt out on coding. You can only do so much. And I knew my limits. So I took a management job and I'm funded to do culture now. Some people didn't believe it had any value-added. But I went off and made it happen, and now my workshops are all oversubscribed! I'm a living example of the culture! Now I do a lot of work at home. Isn't this company super?"

She is preparing her material now, waiting for the participants to arrive. On one table she is sorting the handout packages. Each includes copies of her paper "A Culture Operating Manual - Version II"; some official company materials; a copy of the latest edition of *Tech Talk*, with an interview with the president and extensive quotations from his "We Are One" speech; a review of academic work on "corporate cultures" that includes a key to the various disguised accounts of Tech; a glossary of Tech terms; and a xeroxed paper with some "culture exercises" she has collected for her files over the years. "It covers it all. What is a Techie. Getting Ahead. Networking. Being a Self-Starter. Taking Charge. How to Identify Burnout. The Subcultures. Presentations. Managing Your Career. Managing Your Boss. Women. Over the years I've gathered dynamite material - some of it too sensitive to show anyone. One day I'll write a thesis on all of this. In the meanwhile I'm funded to document and preserve the culture of Engineering. It's what made this company great. 'Culture' is

really a 'people issue' – a Personnel or OD [Organization Development] type of thing, but they have no credibility in Engineering, and I'd rather stay here, close to the action. It's a fascinating company. I could watch it forever. Today I'm doing culture with the new hires. I tell them about how to succeed here. You can't just do the old nine-to-five thing. You have to have the right mindset. It's a gut thing. You have to get the religion. You can push at the system, you drive yourself. But I also warn them: 'Win big and lose big. You can really get hurt here. This place can be dangerous. Burnout City.' And I tell them the first rule: 'Do What's Right.' It's the company slogan, almost a cliché, but it captures the whole idea. 'Do What's Right.' If they internalize that, I've done my job. My job? They come in in love with the technology; that's dangerous. My job is to marry them to the company."

What does "Tech's strong culture" mean to Dave Carpenter and Ellen Cohen? First, and most broadly speaking, it is the context of their work life, a set of rules that guides the relationship between the company and "it's people." At one level, the culture offers a description of the social characteristics of the company that also embodies a specification of required work behavior: "informality," "initiative," "lack of structure," "inherent ambiguity," "hard work," "consensus seeking," "bottom-up decision making," "networking," "pushing against the system," "going off, taking risks, and making things happen." But, as the frequently heard metaphors of "family," "marriage," and "religion" suggest, the rules run deeper. The culture also includes articulated rules for thoughts and feelings, "mindsets" and "gut reactions": an obsession with technical accomplishment, a sense of ownership, a strong commitment to the company, identification with company goals, and, not least, "fun." Thus, "the culture" is a gloss for an extensive definition of membership in the corporate community that includes rules for behavior, thought, and feeling, all adding up to what appears to be a well-defined and widely shared "member role."

But there is more. For Dave Carpenter and Ellen Cohen, as well as many others, the culture has a dual nature: it is not just the context but also the object of their work lives. The culture means not only the implicit and explicit rules that guide and shape their own behavior and experience of work; it is also the vehicle through which they consciously try to influence the behavior and experience of others. The "culture," in this sense, is something to be engineered – researched, designed, developed, and maintained – in order to facilitate the accomplishment of company goals. Although the product – a member role consisting of behavior, thoughts, and feelings – is not concrete, there are specified ways of engineering it: making presentations, sending "messages," running "bootcamp," writing papers, giving speeches, formulating and publishing the "rules," even offering an "operating manual." All are work techniques designed to induce others to accept – indeed, to become – what the company would like them to be.

This duality reflects a central underlying theme in the way culture is construed by many Tech managers: the "culture" is a mechanism of control. Its essence is captured in Dave Carpenter's words: "You can't make 'em do anything; they have to want to." In this view, the ability to elicit, channel, and direct the creative energies and activities of employees in profitable directions – to make them want to contribute – is based on designing a member role that employees are expected to incorporate as an integral part of their sense of self. It is this desire and the policies that flow from it, many insiders feel, that makes Tech "something else."

The use of culture in the service of control in a modern corporation might seem at first strange, even unique, to those for whom culture is a concept more meaningfully applied to Bornean headhunters or to the urban literati. Tech managers, however, are not alone. A practical concern with culture and its consequences is widely shared among those for whom the corporate jungle is of more than passing interest . . .

"It's not just work – it's a celebration!" is a company slogan one often hears from members attempting to describe life at Tech. Less formally, many refer to Tech as "a song and dance company." And, more privately, some agree, that "you have to do a lot of bullshitting in groups." Like much of the self-descriptive conventional wisdom that permeates the company, these observations – whether offered straightforwardly or cynically – contain a valid observation: everyday life at Tech is replete with ritual.

Ritual, most generally speaking, is "a rule-governed activity of a symbolic character which draws the attention of participants to objects of thought and feeling which they hold to be of special significance."¹ At Tech, as insiders well know, members regularly participate in a variety of such structured face-to-face gatherings: speeches, presentations, meetings, lectures, parties, training workshops, and so forth. Dave Carpenter's planned appearance at Lyndsville and Ellen Cohen's culture seminar are examples, along with more routinely occurring events such as [a] weekly team meeting with the members of the ABC project. Whatever else they are intended to accomplish, these events are also occasions where participants, speaking as agents for the corporate interest, use familiar symbols – presentational devices, stylized forms of expression, company slogans and artifacts – to articulate, illustrate, and exemplify what members in good standing are to think, feel, and do. In short, these gatherings, which I will refer to as presentational rituals, are where the organizational ideology – the managerial version of Tech culture and the member role it prescribes – is dramatized and brought to life . . .

Presentational rituals at Tech are an integral and ongoing feature of members' work lives. In one form or another they are a pervasive presence on the Tech scene and constantly make demands on the way members present themselves. Most generally speaking, the performance of the ritual – whether in large and festive settings or on smaller and less formal occasions – is a framing device: members, acting as agents of the corporate interest, attempt to establish a shared definition of the situation within which reality claims derived from the organizational ideology are experienced as valid. To this end, participants are presented with slogans and metaphors ("Tech is a bottom-up company," "We are like a football team") with which the complex reality that is Tech is to be expressed. In particular, a distinct and somewhat abstract view of the member role and its appropriate behaviors ("doing what's right," "working hard," "he who proposes does"), cognitions ("the importance of technological accomplishment," "the centrality of profit"), and emotions ("commitment," "having fun," "enthusiasm") is presented or implied, and, more crucially, specific instances of their correct application are dramatized, noted, and rewarded. In short, like all rituals, these occasions are used as vehicles for the exertion of what Pierre Bourdieu (1977) refers to as symbolic power – the power to define reality.

Tech rituals, however, have two distinct features. First, they are characterized by a decentralization of power. Symbolic power, as one might expect, is clearly possessed

by those invested with formal authority and high status, and most effectively applied when the status gap between participants is large or the power of reward or sanction well defined. But in the context of ritual life at Tech, this type of power may accrue to those who possess other resources as well: the power of numbers found in the pooled resources and the concerted action of groups; temporarily assigned formal roles; acknowledged technical expertise or relevant experience; an open endorsement of the organizational interest; the threat that in Tech's open and shifting environment, reputation, status, and real rewards are in the hands of numerous, often unknown, others; and, if nothing else, a fluency in the language, mode of thinking, and style of ideological discourse. In short, from the point of view of the individual participant, agents of control are everywhere: one is surrounded and constantly observed by members (including oneself) who, in order to further their own interests, act as spokespersons and enforcers of the organizational ideology.

Second, since the ideology is one of openness, informality, individual initiative, and real feelings, symbolic power is exerted, for the most part, quite subtly: overt, centralized control and forced compliance would belie the messages of the ideology. Nevertheless, its presence is revealed in brief episodes that resemble a small-scale version of what Turner (1974) calls "social drama." In Turner's view, a social drama is a fundamental and recurring part of the process of group life that unfolds in predictable stages: a public and dramatic breach or a challenge to the prevailing order is followed by a sense of mounting crisis and a series of attempts at redressive action, and culminates in either an unbridgeable schism between the opposed parties or reintegration and reestablishment of order. At Tech, mini-dramas of control are an ever-present part of presentational rituals. Although they vary in length and intensity, these mini-dramas follow a predictable pattern: a challenge to the ritual frame causes the tension to rise, and members acting as agents for the corporate interest (in the rituals we have observed, these roles are widely shared by participants) use various techniques – Bourdieu (1977) refers to these as "symbolic violence" – to suppress or redefine dissent, silence the deviants, and gain the participants' support. Thus, collective support for the ritual frame is bolstered by the organization's symbolic power, exerted through particular members.

The most dominant response to the exertion of symbolic power in the context of ritual life at Tech is the expression of role embracement; participants express their acceptance of the member role, including not only the prescribed behaviors but, more crucially, the beliefs one must espouse and the emotions one is to experience and display. This occurs to different extents in the various types of presentational rituals: it appears whole-hearted and festive in top management presentations; reserved and tentative in training workshops; and pragmatic, conflictual, and continuous in work group meetings. Despite the subtle and occasionally overt pressures to conform, many members, if asked, would claim that this stance – whether an expression of sincerely held convictions or a scripted role – is freely chosen. Such a response may reflect the participants' experience, but it is also consistent with the ideological depiction of the company: the open community, freedom of expression, "bottom-up decision making," informality, and so forth.

Whatever their causes, displays of role embracement may have a considerable impact on those who perform them. Public expressions of support for an ideological point of view may cause cognitive dissonance: members who, under pressure, pub-

licly espouse beliefs and opinions they might otherwise reject tend to adopt them as an authentic expression of their point of view. Moreover, as Arlie Hochschild (1983) suggests, when institutionally prescribed roles include definitions of appropriate emotions, they require "deep acting": the performer must try to "feel" rather than feign role-prescribed emotions. Consequently, participation in ritual enactments of the member role at Tech – no matter how tentative – may lead to what she calls emotive dissonance: members are inclined to experience the emotions they display as authentic. Over time, cognitive and emotive dissonance may blur the boundary between the performers' perception of an acted role and the experience of an "authentic self." This, in principle, should occur for all displays of role embracement, but it is probably more acute for sustained and scrutinized performances. Particularly susceptible in this regard are those members who perform the various spokesperson roles and those who act as agents of control, whether in their capacity as possessors of authority, as temporary volunteers, or as individuals recognizing the advantages of speaking for the company interest. The performance of such roles, Lewis Coser (1974) points out, is a particularly effective mechanism for instilling commitment to ideological principles among those who perform them. Thus, extensive and ongoing participation in ritual life at Tech, may, as Mills (1940: 908) put it, induce people to become what at first they merely sought to appear.

There are limits, however, to the power of ritual to elicit the expression of role embracement. Some members – perhaps at some cost to their reputation – minimize their participation in ritual events. Others participate as a "secondary audience," excluded from the actual event but aware of it and participating after the fact through reports and reenactments. Such secondary participants may share in some of the potential for "deep acting" of the member role offered by presentational rituals. But in many cases their form of participation is also an indication and a demonstration of lower status, marginality, passivity, or lack of interest. Many members experience both primary and secondary participation at different times, and their effects might not always reinforce each other. More extremely, for many in support and service roles – mainly members of Wage Class 2 and temporary workers – such ritual performances make clear their status as what Goffman (1959) calls "nonpersons": individuals who are present in body only and not considered a relevant part of the scene. Here, too, there might be potential for deep acting, albeit of marginal or alienated roles.

More crucially, however, the ritual form itself contains built-in opportunities for temporary suspension of role embracement: transitional phases and timeouts that bracket and intersperse the ritual frame. These episodes resemble those stages of ritual that Turner (1969) has called "liminal": a relatively unstructured period that occurs between structured modes of relating where the participants' relationship is characterized by "communitas," a relatedness temporarily unmediated by social structure. Liminal phases of ritual, Turner suggests (1969: 167), tend to highlight the most significant dimensions of a specific culture. For example, in his exemplary studies of tribal societies, liminality was shown to be the occasion for role reversals between subordinate and superordinate members: dramatized exchanges between up and down, strong and weak, having and not having authority (Turner, 1969). These he saw as variations on the theme of hierarchy.

At Tech, however, the liminal phases of ritual have a different flavor: not role reversal, but role distancing is their central attribute. These episodes are occasions

for members to assume a reflective and openly self-conscious stance and to share a variety of dramatized and often structured commentaries on their condition and on the ritual frame. Thus, in the course of liminal episodes, a commonsense point of view that is sometimes at odds with the official one is expressed. It includes less sanguine views of managerial ideology ("the bullshit that comes from above") and behavior ("the song and dance"), as well as a different view of member attributes: colorfully labeled behavioral scenarios ("setting up," "finger pointing," "midnight phone calls," "pissing contests," "backstabbing," "crucifying") and experiences ("hanging from shoestrings," "pain," "the fear of God," "burnout"), a cynical awareness of manipulative intents and disguised meanings (giving "Tech strokes," managing and exposing "hidden agendas," doing "rah-rah stuff"), or dispassionate "Tech watching." Expressed differently in the various ritual forms – subtle and controlled in top management presentations, aggressive and critical in training workshops, widespread and playful in work group meetings – the liminal mode provides an alternative reality: participants temporarily detach themselves from their performance of the member role, comment on it, and share with others the awareness, either cheerful or disdainful, of the theatrical nature of the proceedings. Thus, the liminal stages of Tech rituals differ from liminality as Turner depicted it: it is not the meaning of hierarchy (who is up and who is down) so much as the meaning of authenticity (who is "real" and who is not) and inclusion (who is "in" and who is "out") that is being enacted.

Although the centrality of these meanings to the participants' experience of the ritual would seem to undermine symbolic power by juxtaposing common sense and ideology, questioning the ritual frame, and contradicting expressions of role embracement, the reverse is often true. Controlled self-consciousness, appropriate and timely use of an ironic stance, and the ability to shift frames and stances are considered signs of elegance. Members evaluate each other on their ability to express both embracement and distancing and to know when to stop. By structuring and defining as playful those occasions where commonsense alternatives to the formal ideology are pronounced – the shared interpretive routines, the more formally designed timeouts – real dissent is preempted. Moreover, a particular kind of "communitas" between members is fostered: not the one Turner seems to describe (and Kanter [1983: 203] attributes to employees in "strong culture companies"), but the communion of self-aware and talented actors commenting on their roles and performances. These qualities of liminality are interpreted as further evidence of the benign nature of the company and its normative demands. Consequently, within very broad boundaries delineated by those incidents where deviance is openly suppressed, contradicting or escaping an adherence to normative demands is often difficult if not impossible. Participants may become mired ever deeper in a paradoxical normative trap within which whatever one does, thinks, or feels can be – and often is – interpreted as confirmation of ideological reality claims.

Thus, ritual life at Tech is composed of a paradoxical, counterpunctual weaving of common sense, ideology, and the experiences associated with them that brings to the attention of participants a complex, multifaceted, and ambiguous reality. Participants are systematically presented with an explicit awareness of the dramatic mechanisms that underlie the process of framing reality, and an open acknowledgment of the manufactured nature of cultural categories and symbols, including

those that are central to the ritual performance itself. A self-consciousness that could be considered a fatal flaw in the ritual performances now becomes its central theme and is itself highly ritualized. This produces a potentially unstable balance between role embracement and role distancing that constantly calls into question the authenticity of the experiences associated with the member role precisely for those members who are the main targets of normative control.

In sum, presentational rituals are occasions for enacting, enforcing, and reinforcing the display of the managerially sanctioned member role and are thus a mechanism for mediating normative demands and normative responses. The mediating function of ritual, however, is not simple. The juxtaposition of "ideology" and "common sense," of subject and agent, of obligation and choice, of seriousness and humor, of affirmation and denial, of engagement and detachment, of being "in" and being "out," of work and play, of participation and withdrawal, creates a complex web of normative pressures. These pose the central dilemma of membership: to what extent is the enactment of the member role and its cognitive and emotional components the expression of a "real self"? To what extent are behavioral displays and presentations of self no more than scripts consciously enacted in response to organizational requirements? More deeply, to what extent do members control the differences between these modes and the different selves implied? And, ultimately, what is a real – or a false – self?

Note

- 1 This definition, borrowed from Lukes (1975: 291), is designed to separate the definition of *ritual* from its presumed social functions, and to extend it beyond its earlier, more limited application to settings traditionally frequented by anthropologists and to events with distinctly religious overtones (Douglas, 1966). Kertzer (1988: 9) offers an even broader definition: "symbolic behavior that is socially standardized and repetitive." From this perspective ritual is an integral feature of modern secular life (Moore and Meyerhoff, 1977). Obvious examples are the large-scale and publicized events characteristic of modern politics, sports, organized religion, legal institutions, and organizational life (Kertzer, 1988; Lukes, 1975; Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Moore and Meyerhoff, 1977; Trice and Beyer, 1984; Van Maanen and Kunda, 1989). Furthermore, as Goffman (1967) has shown, ritual phenomena lie also at the foundation of routine and seemingly inconsequential social interactions. Such a broad domain, however, sets the stage for semantic and analytic confusion. Taken to the limit, Goffman's view – that interactive behavior that takes into account cultural rules has ritual properties – suggests that ritual, like prose, is everywhere. Thus, for analytic purposes, it is necessary to distinguish types of rituals according to the nature of the social configuration within which they occur, the aims of participants, and, perhaps, the degree to which their ritual nature is openly and self-referentially acknowledged. See Moore and Meyerhoff (1977) for various taxonomies of ritual.

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Editor's Notes on Further Reading

Kunda on Organizational Rituals

In contemporary organizations like the high-tech corporation Kunda studied, shared cognitions, norms, and values may be promoted in symbols and rituals aimed at creating and maintaining internalized employee motivation. Kunda's book is an in-depth investigation of corporate ideology, organizational ritual, normative control, and their consequences for employees' ambivalent sense of self.

Other studies investigating organizations, paid work, and culture include Gideon Kunda and John Van Maanen, "Changing Scripts at Work: Managers and Professionals," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 561 (1999): 64-80; Wendy Nelson Espeland, *The Struggle for Water: Politics, Rationality, and Identity in the American Southwest* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Carol Heimer and Lisa Staffen, *For The Sake of the Children: The Social Organization of Responsibility in the Hospital and the Home* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Barbara Czarniawska, *Narrating the Organization: Dramas of Institutional Identity* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Diane Vaughan, *The Challenger Launch Decision: Risky Technology, Culture, and Deviance at NASA* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Gary Alan Fine, *Kitchens: The Culture of Restaurant Work* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Calvin Morrill, *The Executive Way: Conflict Manage-*

ment in Corporations (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Jennifer Pierce, *Gender Trials: Emotional Lives in Contemporary Law Firms* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Richard Biernacki, *The Fabrication of Labor: Germany and Britain 1640-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Frank Dobbin, "Cultural Models of Organizations: The Social Constructions of Rational Organizing Principles," pp. 117-41 in Diana Crane, ed., *The Sociology of Culture: Emerging Theoretical Perspectives* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994); Dobbin, *Forging Industrial Policy: the United States, France, and Britain in the Railway Age* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Stephen Barley and Gideon Kunda, "Design and Devotion: Surges of Rational and Normative Ideologies of Control in Managerial Discourse," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 37 (1992): 363-99; John Van Maanen and Gideon Kunda, "'Real Feelings': Emotional Expression and Organization Culture," in L. L. Cummings and B. M. Staw, eds., *Research in Organizational Behavior* 11 (1989): 43-103; Paul Hirsch, "From Ambushes to Golden Parachutes: Corporate Takeovers as an Instance of Cultural Framing and Institutional Integration," *American Journal of Sociology* 91 (1986): 800-37; Eric Eisenberg, "Ambiguity as Strategy in Organizational Communication," *Communication Monographs* 51 (1984): 227-42; and John Meyer and Brian Rowan, "Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony," *American Journal of Sociology* 83 (1977): 340-63.

More generally, Kunda uses the "thick description" of signification called for by Geertz to investigate the sort of power relations implicit in commonsense practices Bourdieu is concerned with (see excerpts this volume). In its focus on the consequences of normative control for the sense of self, his work also builds on Goffman's dramaturgical analysis of interaction (e.g. Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959)). Background on the nature and importance of ritual for creating "solidarity without consensus" is provided in David Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

10 Symbolic Boundaries and Status

Michèle Lamont

What is primarily at issue here is the nature of the criteria that people use to define and discriminate between worthy and less worthy persons, i.e., between "their sort of folks" and "the sort they don't much like." To identify these criteria I scrutinize symbolic boundaries – the types of lines that individuals draw when they categorize people – and high-status signals – the keys to our evaluative distinctions. More specifically, different ways of believing that "we" are better than "them" are compared by analyzing both the standards that underlie status assessments and the characteristics of symbolic boundaries themselves – their degree of rigidity, for instance. This contributes to developing a more adequate and complex view of status, i.e., of the salience of various status dimensions across contexts. It also helps us to understand how societies and social classes differ culturally. By contrasting the cultures of members of the French and American upper-middle classes, we will see that the disapproval that New Yorkers often express toward Midwestern parochialism, the frequent criticisms that the French address to American puritan moralism, the scorn that businessmen voice toward intellectualism, and the charges that social and cultural specialists frequently make against materialism and business interests can be interpreted as specific instances of a pervasive phenomenon (i.e., as boundary work) rather than as incommensurable manifestations of national character, political attitudes, regionalism, etc. Using the framework presented here, it will be possible to view prejudices and stereotypes as the supra-individual by-products of basic social processes that are shaped by the cultural resources that people have at their disposal and by the structural situations they live in. . . .

[M]y study focuses on these three standards or types of symbolic boundaries:

Moral boundaries are drawn on the basis of moral character; they are centered around such qualities as honesty, work ethic, personal integrity, and consideration for others. . . . *Socioeconomic boundaries* are drawn on the basis of judgments concerning people's social position as indicated by their wealth, power, or professional success. . . . *Cultural boundaries* are drawn on the basis of education, intelligence, manners, tastes, and command of high culture. . . .

I show that whereas in both France and the United States sociological studies of high status signals have focused almost exclusively on cultural boundaries, and more specifically on a small subset of the cultural signals that are used to draw cultural boundaries, . . . evidence suggests that members of the French upper-middle class draw boundaries on the basis of moral and socioeconomic standing almost as frequently as they do on the basis of cultural standing. Second, . . . whereas sociologists also have often argued that cultural capital is a major basis of exclusion in the United States, the data I collected indicates that American upper-middle-class members stress socioeconomic and moral boundaries more than they do cultural boundaries; this is not the case in France where moral and cultural boundaries are slightly

more important than socioeconomic boundaries; these differences are becoming less accentuated: data suggest that socioeconomic boundaries are gaining in importance in both countries while cultural boundaries appear to be losing in importance in the United States and possibly in France. . . .

The national boundary patterns . . . conceal important internal cultural variations within both the French and the American upper-middle classes. To unearth them, I compare groups of individuals who, due to their occupation or social trajectory, have different market conditions and different relationships with economic rationality: social and cultural specialists with for-profit workers, intellectuals with non-intellectuals, the upwardly with the downwardly mobile, and those whose family has been part of the upper-middle class for several generations with those who have recently entered the group. Examining these internal variations helps us gain a better knowledge of the role played by proximate structural conditions in shaping boundaries. It also permits obtaining richer knowledge concerning variations in the boundary work of various groups. While exploring such differences, I discuss further the causes of the greater French orientation to culture and American materialism. I show that national patterns in boundary work reinforce occupational patterns, distinct occupational groups having an impact on strengthening or weakening cultural and socioeconomic boundaries in their society.

Social and Cultural Specialists and For-Profit Workers

[O]ccupation is one of the main dimensions that define the identities of upper-middle-class men. It seems likely that patterns of boundary work will vary considerably across occupational groups, and my interviews suggest that indeed they do.

Profit Making and Boundary Work

In *Economy and Society*, Max Weber distinguished between economic and value rationalities: economic rationality dominates contemporary life by organizing it around a systematic orientation toward profit and efficiency. In contrast, value rationality, which is antithetical to economic rationality, is "determined by a conscious belief in the value for its own sake of some ethical, aesthetic, religious or other form of behavior" [Vol. 1, p. 25].

In trying to explain fluctuations in level of political liberalism, social scientists have pointed out how political attitudes vary with the structural relationship that people have with economic rationality and with economic necessity more generally. For instance, some have suggested that people who grew up during periods of economic prosperity are more prone to favor postmaterialist values such as self-actualization, environmentalism, sexual permissiveness, and opposition to nuclear power and armament: these people have had more "formative security," i.e., they (or their families) had a strong market position during their growing-up years and are, therefore, less concerned with materialist values and with economic rationality. Along the same lines, Seymour Martin Lipset has argued that intellectuals (in his definition, social and cultural specialists) have dissenting attitudes toward capitalism

and the business class because their work requires that they maintain a certain independence from commercialism. Following Lipset's lead, I have suggested that the political liberalism and dissent of professionals and managers varies with the degree to which their work is instrumental to profit making (i.e., is directed to and justified by the creation of goods and services that realize a profit), and with the degree to which these upper-middle-class workers depend upon the market system for their livelihoods (whether they are employed in the private sector or in the public and nonprofit sectors)...

I generalize this hypothesis to other cultural realms to suggest that the boundary-drawing activities of the members of the upper-middle class varies with the degree to which their occupation is instrumental to, and dependent on, profit making: because the professional energies of artists, social workers, priests, psychologists, scientific researchers, and teachers are oriented toward attaining cultural, spiritual, or humanitarian goals, and because their professional achievements cannot be measured primarily in economic terms, one can expect these people to put more emphasis on cultural or moral standards of evaluation. On the other hand, because the labor of accountants, bankers, marketing executives, realtors, businessmen, and others like them is more dominated by the pursuit of economic rationality as they set goals based on cost/benefit analysis, and because their success is measured in economic terms, these individuals are more likely to value socioeconomic standards of evaluation. For similar reasons, intellectuals might draw stronger cultural boundaries and weaker socioeconomic boundaries than nonintellectuals.

To examine these hypotheses, the respondents were divided in two groups: (1) those involved in capitalist production and distribution, i.e., in the institutional mechanisms of profit making (business ownership, management, sales and applied technology), and in market enhancement (banking and finance), and (2) those that are not involved in these mechanisms, i.e., those who work in occupations in the media, the academe, the arts, etc. I further divided interviewees into two groups based on their sector of employment, positing that nonprofit and, to a greater extent, public sector employees are provided by their organizations with relative freedom from profit-making concerns, given that these organizations often depend on public funding and/or on donations for their existence and are not as directly dependent on the laws of supply and demand. On the basis of these distinctions, I classified respondents into four occupational aggregates depending on their sector of activity and the contribution of their work to the realization of profit. These four categories could be represented as a spectrum of increasing dependency on, and utility for profit making...

Patterns of Exclusion Across Occupational Groups

The conversations I had reveal that... social and cultural specialists and for-profit workers express somewhat critical attitudes toward one another. Indeed, by drawing antisocioeconomic boundaries in favor of cultural ones, social and cultural specialists often reject for-profit workers as impure: they often are critical of business types for their excessive materialism and lack of concern for cultural issues. For instance, a university professor in New York expressed his disappointment in his son, a business school student, for not being intellectual enough:

It's very frustrating to see your own son walk away from all of your own values... [H]e can't read a novel and be impressed by it. He can't see something in the newspaper and recognize it as important. Even when he does well in school, it's purely a manipulative or mechanistic approach... He is probably well suited for the business culture. But I would prefer if he had ideas. If he went to Princeton, where he could pursue cultural wealth and achievement... Even when he rebels, he rebels in the way that is prescribed by the movies.

For-profit workers are not different: many expressed their dislike for the cultural style of social and cultural specialists, rejecting the cultural purity principle at the same time. For instance, a senior manufacturing executive who manages a large plant and several thousand employees in Clermont remarked that ideologues and intellectuals "have a bad reputation in France. They live on a cloud. They are not realists. They isolate themselves through their language." Likewise, a self-employed insurance agent who lives in St. Cloud criticized technocrats because "to tell you that this pen is red, they will talk for two hours, and at the end, we will learn that the pen is red. They like to listen to themselves." Along the same lines, a sporty-looking Clermont-Ferrand architect whom I interviewed in his stylish postmodern apartment explained to me that those who specialize in abstract thought are inadequate: "Intellectuals are disconnected from reality. They are too much into the cerebral dimension, they don't get out of it. This gets on my nerves. I think that the intellectual who only gets stuck in intellectual things does not try to help others. He is happy in his own little universe."

The opposition between the two groups is often expressed under the cover of political attitudes, symbolic and political boundaries being drawn at one and the same time. This came up often during our conversations, but rarely as clearly as when a right-wing Clermont-Ferrand hotel manager described to me his hatred for the Socialists. He said: "I am anti-Socialist, completely. [Socialists] are all teachers... intellectuals. They have a bad attitude. They are bourgeois, i.e., very attached to their privileges... They are jealous, interested. I find in them many bad qualities."

The extent to which political attitudes and symbolic boundaries overlap cannot be explored here (this could well be the topic of an entirely separate study). Suffice it to say that attitudinal patterns such as opposition to capitalism, the business class, and unregulated economic activities as well as support for urban beautification, environmentalism, self-actualization, and income distribution could be taken as expressions of symbolic boundaries, i.e., as a way of drawing cultural (and moral) boundaries and of rejecting socioeconomic boundaries. On the other hand, opposition to a strong welfare state might indicate a defense of socioeconomic boundaries and of another type of moral boundary based not on human solidarity but on a belief in the importance of strong work ethics. Just as social and cultural specialists (or intellectuals) differ from for-profit workers in their political orientation, they also adopt different definitions of high status signals.

A comparison of individual scores on the moral, cultural, and socioeconomic dimensions reveals that social and cultural specialists are somewhat more culturally exclusive than for-profit workers, that the latter group is slightly more likely to draw strong socioeconomic boundaries than social and cultural specialists and that moral boundaries are equally valued by both groups. I am suggesting that the proximate structural positions of the men I talked to, as revealed by their relationship with the

realization of profit, do shape their boundary work. This is again confirmed by a comparison of the boundary work of intellectuals and nonintellectuals, the first group having a lower instrumentality for the realization of profit: the vast majority of intellectuals draw strong cultural boundaries compared to less than a quarter of the interviewees who are considered nonintellectuals. Such occupational patterns might be reinforced by the market position of social and cultural specialists and that of intellectuals: those whose work is less instrumental to, and dependent on, profit making generally have market positions that are inferior to those of for-profit workers as their opportunities for mobility are often less abundant and their income generally lower. This might lead them to value forms of prestige other than socio-economic status.

Additional evidence suggests that proximate structural position affects boundary work: compared to social and cultural specialists in public or non-profit sections, those working in the private sector draw boundaries that are more similar to the boundaries drawn by for-profit workers. This reflects their higher dependency on and instrumentality to the realization of profit as these interviewees are involved in the public sector or are for-profit workers. Likewise, the self-employed for-profit workers score slightly higher than the salaried for-profit workers on the socio-economic scale. These patterns persist when the two occupational categories are compared within each site. Further studies, however, based on larger data sets are needed before firm conclusions can be drawn on such comparisons. . . .

[Some] evidence suggests that intellectuals feel more marginal to American mainstream culture than French intellectuals do in France. Similarly, American social and cultural specialists seem to be more marginal in American culture than are their French counterparts in their own culture. Steven Brint indicated that in the United States, liberal sentiments are highly focused in a few predictable groups in the middle class, making these groups more different from the rest of the population than they would otherwise be in societies such as France where liberal and social-democratic views are more spread across various middle-class segments. This pattern can probably be extrapolated to attitudes other than political attitudes: strong cultural boundaries are likely to be characteristic of only a relatively small segment of the American population, whereas in France such boundaries might be found among wider groups, including among for-profit workers. The next section provides support for these hypotheses.

National Patterns and the Dynamics of Occupational Groups

The national patterns [distinguishing France and the US] reinforce boundary-drawing patterns across groups. Interviews and the quantitative ranking of respondents on the three dimensions confirm this:

1. French social and cultural specialists draw stronger cultural boundaries than American social and cultural specialists do. In this context, it is hardly surprising that they often have a very charismatic view of their work, as is most tellingly expressed by Jean Lebleu, a bearded philosophy professor who lives in Clermont in a small house cluttered with books. Talking to me through the heavy smoke of his Gitane cigarettes, he describes his *métier* with great gestures and emphasis:

I thought I could give young people the pleasure of discovering the company of others, of intellectual giants, the company of poets, novelists, philosophers and eruditi, the very men who helped me to understand life in a new light at the time when I was really discouraged . . . I would like to do for [the students] what my masters did for me. I had teachers who were almost gods for me, because of the depth of their minds, their intellectual limpidity, their humor, their irony, the way they were able to synthesize, their ability to help me discover unsuspected things. My teachers are the ones who gave me faith in myself, who opened new horizons for me, who forced me to go further, to be more demanding toward myself.

Not a single American cultural specialist expressed half as strongly his devotion to the value rationality that animates his professional vocation.

2. The same French social and cultural specialists draw much weaker socio-economic boundaries than their American counterparts. Conversely, French teachers expressed fewer regrets for not having chosen a more lucrative occupation. Most take their small income to be the result of an active and positive choice on their part and of their decision to put freedom and self-actualization above money, as explained here by the literature professor who teaches in a *lycée* in the Paris region . . .

I prefer to make what I make and be free rather than make twice as much and have to be subservient. I could not bear to be a butcher . . . the dependency on the customers, the fact of having to say "yes, miss; no, miss," of having to pay attention to her dog, while you should tell her to leave the dog outside because of hygiene. Or of having to be nice to a person who takes half an hour to get what she needs while there is a line of people waiting outside . . . But even more generally I don't like the notion that how you are doing financially depends on how you behave toward other people, with more or less insincerity . . . because it means a loss of freedom . . . I know that I make much less than my neighbors, including those whose professions require less of them intellectually. But this really leaves me indifferent. They can try to impress me with their Mercedes, but I go on my bicycle, no problem . . . For me, the value of things is not measured this way.

Along the same lines, a Versailles priest whose family is part of the most traditional French bourgeoisie explains that in his view his small income

is a question of independence . . . The fact of not having a high salary allows me to choose to do what I do independently of what it gives me monetarily. When I worked in the corporate world, I made five or six times what I make now . . . But today I don't take money into consideration in choosing what I do or don't do, in deciding what activities I will get involved in . . . This allows me to avoid falling into mediocrity, and it allows me to do something interesting with my life . . . not to be only a widget in a large machine . . . to go further in experiencing things and in getting totally involved in what I do.

A French social worker whom I interviewed in the bare office of a charitable organization located in the Sixth Arrondissement offers a similar explanation for his professional choices when he says that

the nonprofit sector gives you a chance to invest yourself personally in many ways . . . It gave me a chance to live according to my Catholic faith, my Christian faith. I made the decision to have an effect, even if a limited one, on our society, and more particularly on

social inequality... Making money is not my professional motivation. I experience everyday how difficult it is for a family to live in Paris with a small salary... but I accepted that when I chose to work for the nonprofit sector... Honestly, I do not regret it. I believe that it is good to reduce income inequality. So in theory I personally live in coherence with that.

Like the Clermont-Ferrand philosophy professor, these men stress the value rationality that motivated their vocational choice over the economic rationality emphasized by "mainstream" society. This conviction that their comparatively low salaries are compensated by exceptional opportunities not available in the business world for service or personal fulfillment – are compensated by the fact that they are getting more out of life – was less frequently communicated by American social and cultural specialists. Indeed, members of the latter group more often denigrated their profession and voiced regrets for not having chosen a more lucrative occupation. Several told me that they hope to change their career course "because of the money issue." For instance, a second-generation Italian who works as a recreation specialist in New Jersey explained that he was in the process of finishing college courses in financial planning to pursue a new career because "I have to try to financially secure myself and my little boy." Along the same lines, a Scarsdale science teacher told me that "I think if I had to do it all over again, I would put myself in a position where I had more opportunities to demonstrate my individualism... such as business..." A sizable number of American social and cultural specialists seem to believe that people who are really smart "go for the money" and that only "losers," people who are not "totally with it," and people who could not pay for the training that would qualify them for higher-paying work, would take a job with low monetary rewards. Along the same lines, echoing the Indianapolis minister... for whom money was the main yardstick of his "professional success," this New York teacher has also totally absorbed the principles of economic rationality, transposing them onto the educational and cultural worlds:

I am not one of those sacrificial-teachers types that will spend inordinate amounts of time working for almost nothing. I really don't do anything in life, or hardly anything right now, that I don't get paid for, I'm a professional vocalist, and I never sing in any church or temple or concert hall without being paid. Also, a lot of teachers do an awful lot of volunteer work of all kinds. It's not doing their professionalism very much good. I have to admire them to a certain extent that they're willing to spend that much time, but I have a family and other interests, and I just really can't see spending the extra time. I work efficiently enough so that they're impressed enough with my work to pay me a lot. But I wouldn't be there if they didn't pay me, and if I change jobs it would be because of a combination of cost of living and a salary and so on.

While these few individuals do not represent the full repertoire of interpretations through which social and cultural specialists understand their place in American society, their views echo perspectives voiced frequently. They all hint at the fact that this group has not developed an alternative subculture as highly coherent as that of its French counterpart, an alternative subculture that would legitimate value rationality over economic rationality and clearly support cultural standards of status assessment. In this context, it is hardly surprising that American social and cultural specialists draw stronger socioeconomic boundaries than their French counterpart.

3. The comparison of scores on the three dimensions shows that French for-profit workers draw considerably stronger cultural boundaries than their American counterparts. Accordingly, various French for-profit workers have joined social clubs and associations where they can maintain a certain level of intellectual activity. The Freemasons are particularly popular because this organization puts a strong emphasis on philosophical and spiritual issues and provides individuals a forum in which "to ask oneself important questions beyond how to balance a budget or which car to buy... questions on the meaning of life, the meaning you give to your life, what actions you should carry out" (financial advisor, Clermont-Ferrand). An unusually charming and articulate Paris lawyer explains in similar terms that it is crucial for him to share ideas with people who have

a similar search for truth, for spirituality, a detachment from materialism which is invading us more and more. [We need to] be able to take distance toward this, to attach more importance to other-worldly things that make us human... What I miss in my everyday professional life is the stimulation to push further certain ideas and topics that are not related to everyday life. I need to think about things like "Truth," otherwise I am living like an animal. I can't live only for my work. I have professional satisfaction when I win a trial, but this is only a technical satisfaction. The rest of my time is spent developing argumentations, and this is quite banal.

Not a single American working in the private sector indicated participation in organizations that would be the intellectual equivalent of the Freemasons, whereas at least ten Frenchmen revealed that they were involved with this group – largely for intellectual and spiritual reasons – despite the fact that as members they were sworn to secrecy.

4. Finally, a comparison of scores shows that American for-profit workers are on average considerably more socioeconomically exclusive than their Parisian counterparts and slightly more socioeconomically exclusive than the Clermontois. This, along with the trends described above, clearly suggests that national patterns in boundary work reinforce the patterns typical of occupational groups in both countries, French for-profit workers being more culturally inclined than their American counterparts, while American social and cultural specialists are more materialistic than their French counterparts. More generally, the dynamic between social and cultural specialists and for-profit workers in both countries reflects the dynamic between cultural and socioeconomic boundaries in France and the United States: cultural boundaries are strongest and are most stressed by a wider population in the context where intellectuals and social and cultural specialists themselves play a more active role in promoting value rationality and legitimating cultural standards of evaluation.

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Editor's Notes on Further Reading

Lamont on Symbolic Boundaries and Status

Michèle Lamont explores cultural variation in status judgments in interviews with 160 upper-middle class men in the United States and France. The concept of symbolic boundaries (see Nippert-Eng excerpt this volume) helps analyze the meanings underlying status assessments. The book compares symbolic boundaries cross-nationally, and also assesses differences between residents of major and provincial cities, between upwardly mobile men and others, and, as in this selection, between men in different types of occupations.

To some extent this study may be seen as a response to Bourdieu's investigation of the relations between social position and cultural taste in France in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984). Lamont's view that Bourdieu overstates the nature and importance of "high culture" status markers is echoed in various ways in Bryson (excerpted this volume), and in the findings of Richard Peterson and his colleagues that high status groups in the US now base status claims on a relatively indiscriminate "ability to appreciate": see for example Richard Peterson and Roger Kern, "Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob to Omnivore," *American Sociological Review* 61 (1996): 900-7. David Halle challenges the notion that art functions as cultural capital in the United States in *Inside Culture: Art and Class in the American Home* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993). See also Michèle Lamont and Marcel Fournier, eds., *Cultivating Differences: Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of Inequality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Helmut Anheier, Jurgen Gerhards, and Frank Romo, "Forms of Capital and Social Structure in Cultural Fields: Examining Bourdieu's Social Topography," *American Journal of Sociology* 100 (1995): 859-903; Bonnie Erickson, "Culture, Class and Connections," *American Journal of Sociology* 102 (1996): 217-51; Paul DiMaggio, "Classification in Art," *American Sociological Review* 52 (1987): 440-55; DiMaggio, "Cultural Capital and School Success," *American Sociological Review* 47 (1982): 189-201; and Douglas Holt, "Distinction in America? Recovering Bourdieu's Theory of Tastes from its Critics," *Poetics* 25 (1997): 93-120.

For other studies of symbolic boundaries see editor's note to excerpt from work by Nippert-Eng and Michèle Lamont, ed., *The Cultural Territories of Race: Black and White Boundaries* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press and New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1999); Lamont, *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press and New York: Russell Sage Founda-

tion, 2000); Michèle Lamont and Laurent Thevenot, eds., *Rethinking Comparative Cultural Sociology: Repertoires of Evaluation in France and the United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and Cynthia Fuchs Epstein, *Deceptive Distinctions: Sex, Gender and the Social Order* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press and New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1988). On the way moral boundaries have been linked to class reproduction in moral crusades see Nicola Beisel, *Imperiled Innocents: Anthony Comstock and Family Reproduction in Victorian America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); "Morals Versus Art: Censorship, The Politics of Interpretation, and the Victorian Nude," *American Sociological Review* 58 (1993): 145-62, and "Class, Culture, and Campaigns against Vice in Three American Cities, 1872-1892," *American Sociological Review* 55 (1990): 44-62. On intra-class differences between service and for-profit workers, see also for example Steven Brint, "'New Class' and Cumulative Trend Explanations of the Liberal Political Attitudes of Professionals," *American Journal of Sociology* 90 (1984): 30-71.

11 Symbolic Exclusion and Musical Dislikes

Bethany Bryson

Background

Music as a Symbolic Resource

Music has long been considered an important part of social life. Its symbolic and ritual powers are used to explain both social cohesion and cultural resistance (Willis 1977; Hebdige 1979; Rose 1994). Furthermore, music is an important cultural and communicative medium. For instance, Cerulo (1995) describes how national anthems represent identity and communicate a nation's position in the world system. Likewise, Weinstein (1991) demonstrates that heavy metal music generates community and solidarity among fans while sending an unmistakable message to its detractors.

Music contains a complex set of dimensions, sounds, lyrics, visual cues, social relations, and physical acts (DeNora 1991; Dowd 1992). Music also permits many levels of engagement, from humming to oneself to screaming above the music with 30,000 fans. Given its symbolic and social potency, it is no wonder that music is such an important part of human society, that nearly every nation has an anthem, that most religious ceremonies involve music, and that singing is so frequently a part of political rallies. The importance of music to group identity and social differentiation, then, suggests that musical taste provides a good test for questions about symbolic boundaries. Therefore, I use musical taste to examine a more general theory of cultural exclusion.

High-Status Exclusiveness

Most sociologists of culture agree that some forms of cultural consumption serve as markers of social status (Weber [1968] 1978). For instance, knowledge of fine arts, literature, and upper-class etiquette signals wealth and prestige. Such knowledge may also serve as a passkey for entrance into elite social life. Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977) calls this passkey *cultural capital* because it is cultural knowledge that can be translated into real economic gains, for example, by allowing access to elite social networks and clubs where business deals often are made (Kanter 1977).

By restricting access to resources, social status can be translated into market position and political status. This process can be seen as the result of two interrelated levels of exclusion. First, *social exclusion* is a process of social selection that is based on a previously determined set of cultural criteria and is exercised by people with high levels of income, education, and occupational prestige (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Social exclusion occurs at the level of social relations and is the sort of "social closure" that Weber ([1968] 1978: 342, 933, 935) addresses as the monopolization of resources and inclusion in social intercourse.

The second level, *symbolic exclusion*, is the source of those "previously determined cultural criteria." Whereas social exclusion refers to the monopolization of human interactions, symbolic exclusion depicts the subjective process that orders those social interactions – taste. This process, then, is a form of "boundary-work" (Gieryn 1983; Lamont 1992) that continuously recreates the positive, negative, and neutral attitudes toward cultural cues and that define these cues as more or less acceptable in various situations. The present study focuses on symbolic exclusion. The analytical distinction between social exclusion and symbolic exclusion highlights an important empirical difference between behavior and attitudes. Note, however, that symbolic systems are social and that social exclusion can occur without physical interaction.

Music is one type of cue that can be used to construct symbolic boundaries between groups or individuals. Therefore, I analyze *musical exclusion* as a type of symbolic exclusion and operationalize it as dislike for various music genres. I use the terms *musical tolerance* or *cultural tolerance* to refer to the absence of dislike for a cultural cue or music genre. Musical tolerance, then, is operationalized as the complement of musical exclusiveness – not its opposite.

The crux of symbolic exclusion is dislike, and according to Bourdieu, the exercise of dislike and exclusion is more important to high-status individuals than to others:

Tastes (i.e., manifested preferences) are the practical affirmation of an inevitable difference. It is no accident that, when they have to be justified, they are asserted purely negatively, by the refusal of other tastes. In matters of taste more than anywhere else, all determination is negation; and tastes are perhaps first and foremost distastes. . . . The most intolerable thing for those who regard themselves as the possessors of legitimate ["highbrow"] culture is the sacrilegious reuniting of tastes which taste dictates shall be separated (Bourdieu 1984: 56–7).

For Bourdieu, the relationship between the symbolic level and the social level is reciprocal (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). While they shape each other, other material and subjective factors intervene to prevent the two levels from being perfectly aligned. Symbolic exclusion and social exclusion are assumed to work in a manner similar to another pair of terms more familiar to American sociologists – prejudice and discrimination.

Bourdieu's (1984) main exposition on what I have called "symbolic exclusion" argues that knowledge about fine arts is a status cue while popular taste is rejected. "The higher the level of education, the greater is the proportion of respondents who, when asked whether a series of objects would make beautiful photographs, refuse the ordinary objects of popular admiration . . . as 'vulgar' or 'ugly'" (Bourdieu 1984: 35). Bourdieu's perspective, then, expects high-status individuals to be the most culturally exclusive. That is, they distinguish themselves with an exclusive culture that rejects the cultural patterns and tastes of other groups.

Educated Tolerance

When the well-documented finding that education increases political tolerance (Adorno et al. 1950; Stouffer 1955; Davis 1975; Nunn, Crockett, and Williams

1978; Lipset 1981) is extended to cultural tolerance, the predicted effect of education is the opposite of that expected by theories of high-status exclusiveness.

To the extent that political tolerance is a belief that civil liberties should be extended to nonconformist groups (Stouffer 1955), political intolerance is a measure of symbolic exclusion. That is, political tolerance refers to the willingness to include specified groups within the boundary of "citizen" – or "us" as opposed to "them" (Gamson 1995). In the realm of public opinion, then, the term "political tolerance" can be seen as a general reluctance to symbolically exclude nonconformists from the category "citizen."

To link these two literatures, I propose that dislike of social groups is associated with dislike of music genres. My specific expectations are twofold. First, political intolerance – the general tendency to exclude social groups symbolically – should be positively related to musical exclusiveness – the general tendency to exclude music genres symbolically. Second, because I see both political intolerance and musical exclusiveness as forms of symbolic exclusion, contra Bourdieu's prediction, I expect education to reduce musical exclusiveness, just as it reduces political intolerance, and income and occupational prestige are expected to have little or no effect on musical exclusiveness when the impact of education is held constant (Davis 1975).

Symbolic Racism

Kinder and Sears (1981) propose a two-stage description of racism and public opinion. Termed *symbolic racism*, the model suggests, first, that racism shapes cultural (value) orientations and, second, that racism and the resulting set of orientations together may explain public opinion about interracial issues. Whites' stereotypes about African Americans, which can be considered symbolic exclusion, may be good predictors of Whites' discomfort with residential integration, which can be considered an estimate of social exclusion (Farley et al. 1994).

I provide a theoretical foundation and an empirical test for the relationship between racism and cultural orientations that has been named *symbolic racism*. Here, "stereotypes" are understood as symbolic boundaries between social groups that reinforce simple dislike. These "stereotypes" or cultural differentiations are, furthermore, extended from the realm of values (usually relating to work, family, and economics) to the field of musical taste. Thus, racism is expected to predict dislike for the types of music that are disproportionately liked by Hispanic Americans or African Americans.

Patterned Tolerance

Recent research on political tolerance raises new questions about the reason for and universality of education's liberalizing effect (Phelan et al. 1995). Jackman and Muha (1984) critique the earlier assertions of Stouffer (1955), Davis (1975) and others that education increases democratic liberalism through simple enlightenment. Jackman and Muha claim that highly educated people have only a superficial commitment to the rhetoric of democratic liberalism, and oppose real social changes if the changes threaten their status. Jackman and Muha show that the strong effects

of education on abstract beliefs about the importance of racial equality are not present for attitudes about concrete actions intended to foster racial inequality. Their work suggests that the political tolerance displayed by educated respondents is, in fact, only a carefully cultivated status symbol.

In a new formulation of the superficial ideology explanation, Schuman and Bobo (1988) show that opposition to neighborhood racial integration may be based on perceived class differences between Whites and African Americans rather than a lack of commitment to racial equality. In abstract form and when the class status of an African American family is at least equal to that of the respondent, racial integration is approved, but in concrete form, respondents often see residential integration as the entrance of lower-class families into middle-class neighborhoods. Thus, respondents displayed a commitment to democratic liberalism with respect to racial integration but continued to resist class integration.

If my proposition that dislike of a social group is evidenced by dislike of that group's perceived culture is correct, Schuman and Bobo's (1988) findings suggest that the apparently tolerant tastes of educated respondents may mask a systematic dislike of music genres whose audiences have lower than average levels of education. This prediction has important implications for our understanding of the wide-ranging tastes of highly educated cultural "omnivores" (Peterson 1992; Peterson and Simkus 1992; Peterson and Kern 1996). That is, rather than being indiscriminately broad, omnivorous taste may include high-status types of music that are popular among non-Whites, especially "world music" (Peterson 1990) genres like reggae and Latin music, while excluding low status genres like gospel and country regardless of their association with race or ethnicity. (See DiMaggio and Peterson 1975 for a discussion of country music's status and audience.) Identifying boundaries around broad taste would allow us to more confidently interpret Peterson and Kern's (1996) findings as a specific pattern of taste, rather than as evidence against the existence of high-status culture (Halle 1993).

A tendency for patterns of broad taste to exclude low-status genres would suggest that cultural breadth, or tolerance, could itself be a source of cultural capital. Unlike the refined form of cultural capital that Bourdieu (1984) documented in France, however, this contemporary American emphasis on breadth and tolerance would be more accurately described as *multicultural capital* – the social prestige afforded by familiarity with a range of cultural styles that is both broad and predictably exclusive. I add the term "multi" to "cultural capital" in order to specify a content of cultural capital, not to modify its meaning. That is, multicultural capital should not be included in a list of "types" of capital (e.g., social capital, cultural capital, and economic capital). However, the term could be used in an as yet nonexistent list of types of *cultural capital* (e.g., multicultural capital, high-cultural capital, counter-cultural capital, techno-cultural capital, etc.). (See Lamont 1992 and Erickson 1991 for work in this direction.)

This specific pattern of broad taste can be considered a form of cultural capital to the extent that it meets three criteria (Lamont and Lareau 1988). First, cultural tolerance and openness are widely recognized as symbols of social status among upper-middle-class Americans (Lamont 1992), and that recognition is evident, though less pervasive, in the working class (Lamont 1997). Second, familiarity with this cultural style must, nevertheless, be at least somewhat restricted. Using

Bourdieu's (1984, chap. 8) methodology, then, the frequency of "don't know" responses to questions about musical taste is expected to decrease with education. The third characteristic of cultural capital is that it can serve as the basis of social exclusion. In this case, the potential for exclusion would be evidenced by a class-based distribution of cultural tolerance, on one hand, and a predictable pattern of symbolic exclusion (more dislike of low-status genres), on the other.

Hypotheses

High Status Exclusiveness

H₁: People with high levels of education, income, and occupational prestige dislike more types of music than do people with low levels of education, income, and prestige.

Educated Tolerance

H₂: People with high levels of education dislike fewer types of music than do people with medium and low education, controlling for income and occupational prestige.
H₃: People who are reluctant to extend civil liberties to stigmatized groups dislike more types of music than do people with more tolerant political attitudes.

Symbolic Racism

H₄: Whites who have high racism scores dislike the types of music that are disproportionately liked by people of color more than do people who report less racist attitudes.

Patterned Tolerance

H₅: People who dislike few music genres will dislike those types of music that are liked by people with low levels of education more than other types of music, when education is controlled.

H₆: People who have high levels of education are less likely to report that they are unfamiliar with any music genre.

Measures

Dependent Variables

The General Social Survey (GSS) is a nearly annual survey of noninstitutionalized adults in the United States conducted by the National Opinion Research Center using a stratified random sampling method. The 1993 GSS includes a set of questions about culture, including musical tastes as well as leisure activities and values (Davis and Smith 1993; Marsden and Swingle 1994). These new data make information on musical *dislikes* available for the first time. Like other surveys of taste and participation in the arts, this survey presented respondents with a list of musical categories, but rather than having them choose their favorite or mark all they like, the GSS asked all 1,606 respondents to evaluate each of 18 music genres on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "like very much" to "dislike very much". Using these data, I derive a measure of musical exclusiveness by counting the "dislike" and "dislike very much" responses given by each respondent. . . .

Conclusion

Summary. I seek to resolve the contradiction between two widely accepted theories of culture by highlighting the neglected notion of cultural *exclusion* or dislike. The first perspective posits that people with high social status are the most culturally exclusive and intolerant. The second perspective claims that education increases tolerance, openness, and cultural acceptance. If the most highly educated Americans were ever the most culturally exclusive, this clearly is not the case today.

By analyzing dislikes of 18 types of music, I show that education significantly decreases exclusiveness in musical taste. Thus, the *high-status exclusion* hypothesis (Hypothesis 1) does not accurately describe the distribution of musical taste in the contemporary United States: Respondents with high levels of education reported more tolerant musical taste than those with less education. This supports the first *educated tolerance* hypothesis (Hypothesis 2).

Furthermore, I show that cultural exclusiveness is associated with political intolerance (Hypothesis 3) and that negative attitudes toward social groups result in negative attitudes toward the types of music associated with that group (Hypothesis 4). These findings not only demonstrate that some theories of political tolerance may be extended to cultural attitudes, they also show that patterns of taste are related to group conflict. However, I do not assume that rising levels of education will decrease cultural exclusiveness, as Stouffer (1955) did when he predicted that rising education would obliterate political intolerance. Instead, I draw on recent developments in the study of political tolerance to scrutinize musical tolerance.

I find that highly educated people in the United States are more musically tolerant, but not indiscriminately so. I provide evidence of class-based exclusion in that the genres most disliked by tolerant people are those appreciated by people with the lowest levels of education. Therefore, I suggest that *cultural tolerance should not be conceptualized as an indiscriminate tendency to be nonexclusive, but as a reordering of group boundaries that trades race for class*. If a person with average taste were injected with a serum to encourage broad taste, the first three genres that would disappear from that person's list of dislikes (Latin music, jazz, and blues/rhythm and blues) are significantly associated with non-dominant racial or ethnic groups, while the types of music that are most likely to remain on that person's list of musical dislikes (rap, heavy metal, country, and gospel music) are the four most strongly associated with low education. Furthermore, two of those four most excluded genres – gospel and rap – lie at the intersection of race and education. Their fans tend to be Black and have less education than the general population.

Together with the finding that less educated people more frequently reported being unfamiliar with one or more of the 18 genres, results show that cultural breadth has become a high-status signal that excludes low-status cultural cues and is unevenly distributed by education in the United States. Therefore, I suggest that the phenomenon be understood as *multicultural capital*.

Limitations. With this large data set, I have demonstrated a connection between intergroup affect and musical taste. However, the proportion of variance explained is relatively modest. Therefore, I do not argue that musical dislike is *only* a tool of symbolic exclusion. Cultural taste may also be shaped by the extent to which a

particular work or genre resonates with the cultural orientations of its listeners (Griswold 1992). This can cause taste for the genre to be patterned by social location that, in turn, would reinforce the tendency for the genre to appeal to one group more than others. Also, symbolic exclusion treats cultural cues as "tools" (Swidler 1986), but music can be *used* in other ways as well. Anderson (1990), for example, shows how young African American men use rap music (at high volumes) to gain control of public spaces.

A second limitation of this study is that these data cannot tell us what respondents have in mind when they think of each genre. One of the categories, for instance, is labeled "new age/space music." While 18.2 percent of the respondents reported that they didn't know much about the genre, we cannot tell how the remaining respondents understand the category. . . .

As with most survey data on opinions and attitudes, the GSS imposes cultural categories on respondents (Marsden and Swingle 1994). The bias introduced by this method may be unimportant when "real world" choices are constrained ("For whom do you plan to vote in the upcoming election?"), but an important task in the sociology of culture is to *discover* salient cultural categories rather than assume them. The list used by the GSS vaguely resembles the major categories of music used by popular music distributors, but we cannot be sure how the results would differ if the list were altered. . . .

Finally, it is unclear whether the inconsistency between my findings and Bourdieu's (1984) are due to differences in time, national culture, or methodology. Peterson and Kern (1996) show that the status value of cultural breadth has increased over time in the United States, but Lamont (1992) finds that upper-middle-class Americans are much more reluctant than their French counterparts to draw class boundaries on the basis of cultural taste. Likewise, Weil (1985) finds that the effect of education on anti-Semitism is not constant cross-nationally. In either case, Bourdieu (1984) does not provide much evidence that educated respondents were more *or less* exclusive because, with one exception, he does not ask them about their distastes. His finding that the upper classes have more knowledge about and appreciation for high culture does not contradict the concept of a tolerance line. In fact, support of multiculturalism is positively associated with – rather than opposed to – an appreciation for traditional high culture (DiMaggio and Bryson 1995). Cross-national research is needed to separate theoretical generalities from local strategies of symbolic exclusion.

Contributions. By exploring the connections between literatures on cultural taste, political tolerance, and racism, this analysis contributes to each field. In the political tolerance literature, I address the central question of why there is a relationship between education and democratic liberalism. Researchers have suggested that political tolerance in the United States may be part of an official culture learned through the educational system (Weil 1985; Phelan et al. 1995), but no one had explored the application of status culture theories to this problem. By conceptualizing political intolerance as a set of symbolic boundaries, I separate intergroup affect from beliefs about civil rights. Sullivan et al.'s (1979: 792) suggestion that political tolerance is not related to education when tolerance presumes dislike might be better understood if the importance of the negative relationship between *dislike* and education is considered. It is not the sophisticated understandings of democratic

liberalism that vary, as Jackman and Muha (1984) suggest, but the dislike of cultural (and presumably political) "otherness."

This study also contributes to our understanding of racism by lending support to Schuman and Bobo's (1988) finding that educated respondents resist racial integration only when it means class integration. The correlation between race and class is an important feature of modern industrialized societies. The relationship creates substantial room for ideological confusion and provides an opportunity to study how two types of symbolic boundaries interact. Therefore, research into strategies of self-definition and symbolic exclusion may be crucial to an understanding of class and ethnic relations as well as of the way these cultural categories interact (Lamont 1997).

I also find that class is not the only important basis of cultural exclusion – musical dislikes parallel racial group conflict as well. This finding challenges Bourdieu's description of taste as rooted in class and caused by varying levels of freedom from necessity. The underlying notion that one's experiences shape cultural taste can be applied more broadly, but the way this process shapes other group boundaries remains to be specified.

Finally, this analysis shows how Bourdieu's (1984) theory of high-status cultural exclusiveness may still be useful despite strong evidence that patterns of cultural appreciation in the contemporary United States are inconsistent with his description of cultural capital's *content* (Peterson and Simkus 1992; Halle 1993). Increasing tolerance has undoubtedly made high-status culture more open to racial and ethnic cultural differences. However, tolerance itself may separate high-status culture from other group cultures. This *tolerance line* recreates the pattern of high-status (cosmopolitan) culture in opposition to non-high-status (group-based) culture. Thus, it provides a new criterion of cultural exclusion. . . .

To the extent that symbolic boundaries are used as a basis of social exclusion, study of the politics of taste is essential to our understanding of the subtle forces at work in power relationships and the reproduction of the social structure.

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Editor's Notes on Further Reading

Bryson on Symbolic Exclusion and Musical Dislikes

Investigating how social status is related to taste, Bryson asks whether people express social exclusiveness in their musical antipathies, discussing symbolic boundaries marking race and education. Overall, she finds that while racists do dislike music associated with people of color, musical dislikes tend to be influenced more by education than by racial prejudice. More educated people exhibit patterned tolerance: they dislike fewer types of music, but those genres they do dislike are associated with uneducated audiences. Bryson's investigation adds to research responding to Bourdieu's studies of the relation between social position and cultural taste (see Lamont excerpt and editor's note, this volume).

For more on links between music and group identity see, for example, Lauraine LeBlanc, *Pretty in Punk: Girls' Gender Resistance In a Boys' Subculture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999); Jon Cruz, *Culture on the Margins: The Black Spiritual and the Rise of American Cultural Interpretation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); Richard Peterson, *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Karen Cerulo, *Identity Designs: The Sights and Sounds of a Nation*, ASA Rose Book Series (New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995); Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover, NH and London: University Press of New England and Wesleyan University Press, 1994); George Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism and the Poetics of Place* (London and New York: Verso, 1994); Richard Peterson and Albert Simkus, "How Musical Tastes Mark Occupational Status Group," pp. 152-86 in Michèle Lamont and Marcel Fournier, *Cultivating Differences: Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of Inequality* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Amy Binder, "Media Depictions of Harm in Heavy Metal and Rap Music," *American Sociological Review* 58 (1993): 753-67; Tia De Nora, "Musical Patronage and Cultural Change in Beethoven's Vienna," *American Journal of Sociology* 97 (1991): 310-46; Deena Weinstein, *Heavy Metal: A Cultural Sociology* (New York: Lexington, 1991); Judith Blau, "Music as Social Circumstance," *Social Forces* 66 (1988): 883-902; and Dick Hebdige's classic study of punk subculture in *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London and New York: Routledge, 1979). For a sampling of research on music which emphasizes the organization of production more than audiences, see editor's note

on excerpt from work by Peterson, this volume. For a classic study of the way formal properties affect response to music see Leonard Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1956); other studies which attend to intrinsic properties of music include Albert Bergesen, "Spirituals, Jazz, Blues, and Soul Music: The Role of Elaborated and Restricted Codes," pp. 333-50 in Robert Wuthnow, ed., *The Religious Dimension: New Directions in Quantitative Research* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), and Timothy Jon Dowd, "The Musical Structure and Social Context of Number One Songs, 1955 to 1988: An Exploratory Analysis," pp. 130-57 in Robert Wuthnow, ed., *Vocabularies of Public Life: Empirical Essays in Symbolic Structure* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

12 Raced Ways of Seeing

Darnell Hunt

This [chapter] seeks to capture a slippery micro-macro link. It focuses on (1) the role that race-as-representation plays in the micro-level process of meaning negotiation and construction, and (2) the role that the television experience plays in the construction and reproduction of raced subjectivities. Furthermore, it generically conceptualizes the television viewing and discussion environment in terms of the network analytic concept of clique, employing insights from Garfinkel (1967) and small-groups research in order to trace the meaning-making process in action. The case study I employ is the Los Angeles events of 1992 . . . ["riots" on "rebellion"] and surrounding news coverage. Should one expect to find important raced differences in how viewers make sense of these texts? If so, what are the implications for debates concerning the power of media to influence versus the ability/tendency of viewers to resist? How is the construction and reproduction of raced subjectivities inscribed in the process? . . .

The Use of Pronouns

I defined "race" as "the central axis of social relations" in the United States (Omi and Winant 1986, p. 61: 1994), a "collective representation" that serves to account for (and even legitimate) difference and stratification in society (Prager 1982, p. 102). Because race-as-representation is so pervasive in US culture, it acts as "a fundamental organizing principle of social relationships" (p. 66). At the micro-level, race-as-representation informs the construction and reproduction of identity. As Omi and Winant (1986) put it, "One of the first things we notice about people when we meet them (along with their sex) is their race . . . Without a racial identity, one is in danger of having no identity" (p. 62). But as Hall (1988) points out, identity is composed of multiple dimensions including "race," gender, sexual orientation, class, and so on – the salience of each waxing and waning from situation to situation. How, then, are we to isolate an individual's raced identity as the source of his or her attitudes and actions? That is, how do we know whether what we have termed "raced ways of seeing" is really attributable to "race?"

One approach to answering this question involves identifying how social actors understand themselves, the immediate subject position from which they think and act. In respect to the question at hand, this *subjectivity* consists largely of what is often termed *racial consciousness* – "a set of political beliefs and action orientations" arising out of "the awareness of having ideas, feelings and interests similar to others who share the same [raced] characteristics" (Gurin *et al.* 1980, p. 30). Previous studies (e.g., Cramer and Schuman 1975) suggest that pronoun usage may serve as an insightful indicator of the solidarity social actors share with important ingroups and their distance from certain outgroups. When the referents of these pronouns are raced groups, raced solidarity and distance – raced subjectivity – may be established. . . .

I divided pronouns into two classes: pronouns of solidarity ("we," "us" and "our") and pronouns of distance ("they," "them" and "their"). The first finding that emerges is that the black-raced groups had a higher average rate of solidarity pronoun use (2.54 per minute) than either Latino-raced (1.77 per minute) or white-raced groups (1.44 per minute). Black-raced groups also had a higher average rate of distance pronoun use (9.79 per minute) than either Latino-raced (5.42 per minute) or white-raced groups (4.01 per minute). The significance of these differences for the raced subjectivity question becomes clear when the referents of the pronouns used are explored. . . .

Three important findings emerge regarding the question of raced subjectivities. First, in their discussion of the events and KTTV text, informants in the Latino-raced groups seemed to understand themselves as members of their immediate study group (60 uses), while informants in the South Central groups also thought of themselves as people who live in South Central Los Angeles (48 uses) and as "Latinos" (11 uses):

Not all of *us* were thugs. (mumbled something) That has nothing to do with it! But, you know, last year, I mean, they just, everybody in South Central, they're thugs. *We're* gangsters. *We're* . . . (LATINA group)

It's about people trying to come up with money, with things, freeloading. Because that's what it's really all about. I mean, *our race*. (YOUTH group)

At the same time, the Latino-raced groups generally talked about event participants (204 uses) and the media (163 uses) as if they were distant others:

I understand *they* were very angry and I don't think that justifies anything that *they* did. (MARIA group)

They [reporters] were scared because *they* thought *they* were going to get hurt too. (FAMILY group)

Second, informants in the black-raced groups understood themselves first and foremost as "blacks" (101 uses):

We [blacks] cared about Rodney King, man, because that was one of *our* brothers. (GANG group)

In two of the groups (CORNER and KEISHA) informants also expressed solidarity with event participants (11 uses):

I mean, but that was some stress that people needed to get off they chest, though. *We* really did. (CORNER group)

This is a, umm, white-dominated society and black people have no, no, no – you know, they don't fit in anywhere. And so, I think that, that's why *we* rebel. (KEISHA group)

In contrast, no such solidarity with event participants was expressed in any of the Latino-raced or white-raced groups. For the most part, however, black-raced groups also tended to discuss event participants as if they were distant others (133 uses):

I really don't know what *they* should have done, but that's just not... I don't have the answer really, but that, that did a lot of damage to the city and everything else. (NORTH group)

Black-raced groups also tended to treat the media (173 uses), "whites" (35 uses) and the police (30 uses) as distant others:

During the Gulf War, okay. Wasn't *they* [the media] telling us to be strong, stick together, support your family? Okay, so why *they* wasn't doing that... even though it was a riot, but why *they* wasn't giving us moral support? From the media? You know, I mean *they* wasn't saying nothing. (CORNER group)

We have to do it the white man's way. The only way we can beat, beat the game is to beat *them* [whites] at *their* own game. (CHURCH group)

They [police] was out there by Fox Hills Mall, protecting it. As soon as you go out there, *they* all around you, waiting for somebody to do something. (CORNER group)

Third, informants in the white-raced groups seemed to think of themselves primarily as members of their immediate study group (55 uses):

What's interesting about what *we* just watched [the KTTV text] is that it's so detached.

In three of these groups (MATES, DORM2 and DORM3) informants also talked about themselves as "Americans" (5 uses):

... You say, "That, that couldn't happen here." That total anarchy. You know, the country of Democracy that *we* have - just can't imagine that! (DORM3 group)

But in none of the white-raced groups did informants use solidarity pronouns when speaking of "whites." At the same time, these informants talked about the media (162 uses), event participants (152 uses), and "blacks" (33 uses) as if they were distant others:

That's what happens when *they* [the media] get stories like this, when *they* don't have time for someone to write all of the lines for *them*... (JILL group)

It [the events] was just an excuse for *them* to go wild - a bunch of, of animals. (MATES group)

Well, I just never, I... growing up, I, I, always felt that, ah, African Americans were more or less, ah, a whole separate culture. It was like a, ah, you really, you really, *they* wouldn't really interact with you. I think *they* felt, ah, more like a solidarity amongst *themselves*. (JILL group).

In short, an analysis of pronoun usage suggests that when black-raced informants discussed the events and KTTV text they clearly understood themselves as "black" subjects. White-raced informants, in contrast, generally talked about themselves as members of their immediate study group, while Latino-raced informants seemed to approach the events and KTTV text from a variety of subject positions, "race" being just one....

[A]n individual-level analysis of racial effects supports the group-level findings: black-raced informants left the screening significantly more tolerant of event-related looting and significantly less supportive of event-related arrests than their white-raced and Latino-raced counterparts. Furthermore, socio-economic status and gender, net of raced identification, did *not* seem to be a major determinant of informants' attitudes toward event-related activities. Other studies, of course, highlight the importance of both class and gender in shaping how people make sense of media (see Morley 1980, 1992; Press 1991), in channeling them to specific interpretive communities (Lindlof 1988). But the Los Angeles events were evidently so pregnant with racial meanings that raced subjectivity was the primary identity activated as informants made sense of the KTTV text....

Group Viewing Modes

The most obvious finding is that the white-raced groups tended to be visibly more passive in their reception of the text than either Latino-raced or black-raced groups. Viewers in the white-raced groups sat motionless and quietly throughout the 17-minute screening. I noted no visible reactions in these groups when the KTTV anchor referred to event participants as "thugs," or when the plight of the "Asian" man "drenched in blood" was described. In only one of the groups was there any talk when the KTTV anchors attempted to summarize the events, package them into a coherent, unified narrative. And this talk was *not* critical of KTTV efforts.

In contrast, black-raced groups were quite animated during the screening, with Latino-raced groups not far behind. Several of the black-raced groups and one of the Latino-raced groups promptly reacted with laughter or talk to the labeling of event participants as "thugs." At least two of the black-raced groups and three of the Latino-raced groups responded with talk or body gestures during the report of the "Asian" man "drenched in blood." All of the black-raced and Latino-raced groups engaged in continuous or intermittent episodes of talk during the anchors' summary of the events at the end of the KTTV text.

My failure to note similar visible reactions within white-raced groups during key points in the screening, of course, does not preclude the possibility that invisible reactions were occurring within the heads of white-raced viewers. But when the dearth of *social* activity in white-raced groups is compared to the relative wealth of such activity in black-raced and Latino-raced groups, the case for "race"-based reception differences seems to gain strength. Furthermore, no clear pattern emerged *within* black-raced and Latino-raced groups suggesting that socio-economic status made a difference in reception styles.

Why did black-raced and Latino-raced groups feel it necessary *or* appropriate to be animated during the screenings? Did viewers in the white-raced groups find such activity during the screenings unnecessary or inappropriate? One possible interpretation of the differences in viewing styles between white-raced and non-white-raced informants (black-raced informants, in particular) is that white-raced informants arrived at the screening already in agreement with the textual assumption that "blacks" were the event insiders, feeling somewhat distant from the text and events.

Furthermore, the events had subsided more than eight months prior to the interviews. Perhaps white-raced informants simply were not aroused by the text; maybe they *valued* its meanings differently than black-raced and Latino-raced informants. As one white-raced informant put it:

I mean, it's [the events] just, just kind of a memory that comes up occasionally. But it's not something that I take time, because I wasn't there and it didn't personally affect me.

In contrast, Latino-raced informants who lived in the areas depicted in the text, and black-raced informants, who were depicted as event insiders, responded as if they had a stake both in the events and the KTTV text. Perhaps the zest with which these informants received the text was emblematic of their attempts to negotiate unresolved issues that were important to them. Moreover, given the nature of the assumptions embedded in the text, maybe these informants were forced to "work harder" than their white-raced counterparts to resolve these issues in a satisfying way (see Condit 1994, p. 432)....

Conclusions

When one surveys intergroup patterns in pronoun use, in attitudes toward event-related activities, in group viewing modes, and in polarization outcomes, evidence begins to mount for what I have referred to as "raced ways of seeing." Black-raced and Latino-raced study groups were quite animated during the screening of the KTTV text, while white-raced study groups watched quietly. For black-raced informants, in particular, raced subjectivity was clearly an important lens through which the events and text were viewed. The relatively low salience of raced subjectivity among Latino-raced and white-raced informants echoed the non-black-raced/black-raced divide observed in informant attitudes toward the events. That is, while white-raced and Latino-raced informants were *less* likely than their black-raced counterparts to talk about themselves in raced terms, they were *more* likely than black-raced informants to condemn the looting and fires and to support the arrests. Moreover, socio-economic status and gender seemed to have very little impact on these raced differences. There was clearly a link between racial subjectivity and how informants made sense of the events.

In many respects, the finding of attitude polarization and/or convergence (44 percent of the possible cases) is emblematic of the role that group pressures and expectations play in individual decoding behaviors. Each informant, of course, brought certain personal experiences and understandings concerning the events to his or her own screening and the discussion that followed. These experiences and understandings were in part the products of previous social interactions, previous discussions between the informant and important others. But these experiences and understandings were also the product of *intertextual* relations, informants' continuous dialogue with other texts stored in memory. The group screenings and discussions analyzed in this study represent the intersection of both sets of relations at a given point in time. To put it another way, they represent yet another cycle in the process of meaning-making for the informants, a process that is ongoing.

This observation is important for the following reason: because "race" is not some fixed essence (Prager 1982; Omi and Winant 1986, 1994; Hall 1988, 1989), specific category attributes can be quite fluid and ambiguous from one moment to the next. And because category members often have an investment in their category membership (e.g., seeing it as integral part of identity), they must continually work to achieve and re-achieve membership status anew (Garfinkel 1967) – that is, in the eyes of important others (e.g., network members), and as measured by the texts that position them (Hall 1988, Gray 1995). In this sense, the study screenings and group discussions served as a forum for informants to "do-being Latino," "do-being black," or "do-being white" – to negotiate positions from which to make sense of the KTTV text *and* affirm their own raced subjectivities. In other words, informants activated memories of past experiences and other texts to negotiate group expectations about how Latino-raced, black-raced or white-raced subjects *should* discuss the KTTV text. Indeed, these expectations seemed to influence the subsequent performance and understandings of informants in the study.

For Latino-raced and black-raced informants, in particular, evidence of these expectations at work can be found in several of the arguments that emerged in the group discussions – for example, that people should "stick" to their own "race" (e.g., the FAMILY group) or that "blacks" must unify before they can effectively challenge the system or move ahead (e.g., the CHURCH and KEISHA groups). These prescriptions seem to echo other texts and discourses about key values in "Latino" and "black" culture.

For example, Marin and Marin (1991) argue that "Latino" culture tends to "emphasize the needs, objectives, and points of view of an ingroup," rather than the personal objectives, attitudes and values typically privileged in more individualistic cultures (p. 11). Among Chicanos, in particular, Blea (1988) notes that "[i]ndividualism is seen as Anglo, and profit is valued to the degree that it does not disrupt social relationships" (pp. 64–5). Most Latino-raced informants discussed the events as if they were *not* in the interest of the ingroup. "Latinos" who participated in the events, they argued, were just taking advantage of the situation. Accordingly, Latino-raced informants found relatively little to criticize in the KTTV text's depiction of the events as "undesirable."

This was not the case for black-raced informants.

In his ethnographic study of everyday black-raced Americans, Gwaltney (1980) identifies ethnic solidarity as a key tenet of "black" culture. "White America," he notes, loomed large in his subjects' narratives concerning the history of "black" oppression and resistance. The black-raced informants in this study discussed the events in similar terms, returning again and again to issues of "white" racism and "black" solidarity. It was as if these informants – in accord with classic discourses on black-raced consciousness (see e.g., DuBois 1965; Fanon 1967) – were expected to trace their anxieties back to contact with the "white" world. Indeed, consistent with recent texts highlighting a general "black" suspicion of official knowledge (Gabriel 1988; Turner 1993; Fiske 1994), black-raced informants (unlike their Latino-raced counterparts) seemed predisposed to questioning many of the assumptions embedded in the KTTV text, if not the text's construction itself. As Gray (1993, p. 191) put it,

Various reading strategies and practices produced by black audiences have been, indeed must be, critical, suspicious, and mindful of the dominant and dominating impulses of a racialized social and cultural order, an order that has historically stereotyped, excluded, objectified, and silenced black subjects.

Accordingly, black-raced informants received the KTTV text as a "white text" – one that might provide snippets of useful information, but that ought not be taken at face value.

White-raced informants were much more at ease with the KTTV text, despite their familiarity with and enactment of discourses of media deconstruction. Three of the white-raced groups contained one or more Asian-raced members who agreed with white-raced members that the system was more or less fair, that the events were an undesirable, counterproductive breach of order. Accordingly, these groups sat quietly during the screening of the KTTV text, opting not to talk back to the screen. Furthermore, "race" – with a few exceptions – was not a salient topic in these group discussions. Informants in these groups were generally hesitant to talk about the events in raced terms, despite their frequent references to "blacks" and "African-Americans." Perhaps membership in the dominant "major race" (Hacker 1992) presented white-raced informants with the expectation and luxury to talk about themselves as "Americans" first – *not* as raced subjects (Waters 1990; Feagin and Vera 1995).

In short, while this study's exploration of group discussion and polarization effects treats "race" as a social construct whose reproduction is dependent upon an endless succession of micro-level interactions, the study also acknowledges that raced meanings are reified and reinforced at the macro-level of economics and politics (see Omi and Winant 1986, 1994). In other words, structures situate groups *vis-à-vis* one another in social space, while individuals continually decode the meanings of their unique situations in accordance with normative understandings and expectations (Fine and Kleinman 1983). Over time, this process leads to a patterning of individual-group relationships, thereby establishing an important micro-macro link. . . .

Nonetheless, the relationship at any given moment between raced identification and decoding – what I have termed "raced ways of seeing" – is always a probabilistic one, never a deterministic one (see Fiske 1987). For race-as-representation, as an *immediate* social force, is always experienced by actors through the conduit of concrete situations. In this case study, at least, raced ways of seeing appeared to be a critical factor in informants' decoding of the KTTV text. Moreover, as informants negotiated these ways of seeing, as they replayed intertextual memories and engaged themselves in discussion with network members, they also affirmed (directly or by default) their own raced subjectivities.

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Editor's Notes on Further Reading

Hunt on Race and the Media

Combining recent scholarship on two of the most influential institutions in contemporary American society, race and media, Darnell Hunt asks how different audiences respond to a news broadcast about an episode of racially-identified civil unrest. The larger study uses focus groups along with textual analysis to explore the assumptions implicit in television news, to compare the ways cliques of Latino-raced, black-raced, and white-raced young people interpret the news, and to improve understanding of the ways media audiences both resist and accept media messages.

"Raced ways of seeing" in the media or in response to the media are also investigated in Jacobs' study excerpted this volume; see also Darnell Hunt, *O.J. Simpson Facts and Fictions: News Rituals in the Construction of Reality* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Hunt, "(Re)affirming Race: 'Reality,' Negotiation, and the 'Trial of the Century,'" *The Sociological Quarterly* 38 (1997): 399-422; S. Craig Watkins, *Representing: Hip Hop Culture and the Production of Black Cinema* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Herman Gray, *Watching Race: Television and the Struggle for "Blackness"* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); Robert Gooding-Williams, ed., *Reading Rodney King, Reading Urban Uprising* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Amy Binder, "Constructing Racial Rhetoric: Media Depictions of Harm in Heavy Metal and Rap Music," *American Sociological Review* 58 (1993): 753-67, and JoEllen Shively, "Cowboys and Indians: Perceptions of Western Films Among American Indians and Anglos," *American Sociological Review* 57 (1992): 725-34.

On race and culture more generally, see for instance Jeffrey Prager, "American Racial Ideology as Collective Representation," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 5 (1982): 99-119; Michèle Lamont, ed., *The Cultural Territories of Race: Black and White Boundaries* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press and New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1999); Michèle Lamont, "Colliding Moralities Between Black and White Workers," pp. 265-85 in Elizabeth Long, ed., *From Sociology to Cultural Studies: New Perspectives* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997); and Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States From the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

In contrast to Horkheimer and Adorno (excerpted this volume) and others who emphasize the power of the media over audiences, research like Hunt's investigates the complicated and sometimes critical ways in which audiences negotiate meaning in the mass media. For more on media audiences see, for instance, Ron Lembo, *Thinking Through Television* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Jon Cruz and Justin Lewis, eds., *Viewing, Reading, Listening: Audiences and Cultural Reception* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994); David Morley, *Television, Audiences, and Cultural Studies* (London and New York: Rout-

ledge, 1992); Karl Erik Rosengren, ed., Special Issue on Audience Research, *Poetics* 21 (4) August 1992; Andrea Press, *Women Watching Television: Gender, Class, and Generation in the American Television Experience* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991); Ronald Lembo and Kenneth Tucker, Jr., "Culture, Television, and Opposition: Rethinking Cultural Studies," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 7 (1990): 97-116; Tamar Liebes and Elihu Katz, *The Export of Meaning: Cross-Cultural Readings of Dallas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Ann Swidler, Melissa Rapp, and Yasemin Soysal, "Format and Formula in Prime-Time TV," pp. 324-37 in Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Muriel Cantor, eds., *Media, Audience, and Social Structure* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1986); Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), and Gitlin, "Media Sociology: The Dominant Paradigm," *Theory and Society* 6 (1978): 205-54. See also the discussion of reception in Ronald Jacobs, "Producing the News, Producing the Crisis: Narrativity, Television, and News Work," *Media, Culture and Society* 18 (1996): 373-97.

For another example of the use of focus group methodology to investigate interpretations of news see William Gamson, *Talking Politics* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); for an experimental study of the agenda-setting effects of television news see in Shanto Iyengar and Donald Kinder, *News that Matters* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

More generally see Pierre Bourdieu, *On Television*, trans. Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson (New York: The New Press, 1996); Muriel Cantor and Joel Cantor, *Prime Time Television: Content and Control*, 2nd edn. (Newbury Park: Sage: 1992); and Todd Gitlin, *Inside Prime Time* (New York: Pantheon, 1983).

Important in the rich synthesis of theoretical traditions influencing Hunt's work is a line of reflection about domination and resistance drawing on Gramsci and Raymond Williams (see excerpt this volume) and flourishing in the work of the Birmingham School and later cultural studies; some introduction to this work can be found in Stuart Hall "Culture, the Media and the 'Ideological Effect,'" pp. 315-48 in James Curran, Michael Gurevitch, and Janet Woollacott, eds., *Mass Communication and Society* (Beverly Hills and London: Sage, 1977), and Stuart Hall, "Encoding/decoding," pp. 128-38 in Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, *Culture, Media, Language* (London: Hutchinson, 1980); for later reflections see Long, ed., *From Sociology to Cultural Studies*.

13 "Close to Home": The Work of Avoiding Politics

Nina Eliasoph

If it's not something that [pause] effects [pause] my [pause] family. I don't see [pause] me [pause] doing it. [Speeds up] And-I-mean-of-course-nuclear-war-could-affect-my [chuckles] family. But I still don't – if it's not local, I mean, I'm more – maybe it's small-minded.

(Sherry, a schools volunteer, in an interview)

Was she really as small-minded as she claimed to be? "I care about issues that are close to home," "I care if it affects me personally," "I care if it's for my children": these are the familiar phrases that many Americans use to explain political involvement and apathy. Journalists, activists, and theorists often take these phrases at face value; politicians base social policies on them, trying to play to voters whom they imagine to be self-interested and short-sighted, cutting funds for projects that do not seem "close to home." The phrases are usually interpreted as transparently obvious indications of citizens' self-interest and lack of broad political concern – their "small-mindedness." But these insistent, extravagant expressions of self-interest do not simply indicate clear, straightforward self-interest or parochial thinking. The phrases work hard. Activists, intellectuals, and other concerned citizens often assume that someone like Sherry just doesn't care or is self-interested or ignorant; we try to draw people like her into political participation by impressing upon them that they should care (perhaps by telling them how nuclear war might affect their kids), or telling them not to be so self-interested.

This article shows just how hard someone such as Sherry has to work to avoid expressing political concern. Penetrating this pervasive *culture of political avoidance* requires a new way of understanding this thing that sounds like apathy and self-interest. . . .

It took what I will call "cultural work" for volunteers to transmute feelings of powerlessness into expressions of self-interest. Coming from a range of perspectives, many theorists of public life argue that structural powerlessness, inner feelings, and cultural expressions cannot be distilled out of each other; each layer of experience depends on the others – and the public sphere is vital precisely because these levels of experience never match up perfectly. This article spotlights three moments in the *intellectual, emotional, and interactional* process of everyday political meaning-making: citizens' 1. implicit knowledge about their own *structural power*, 2. implicit agreement about what kinds of *feelings* citizens should have, and 3. implicit agreement about what the *very act of speaking about politics* in public means. . . .

The illustrations I use to make this article's theoretical point come from a study that examined how political disengagement was socially produced in interaction, and was not just a by-product of "inner" beliefs or "outer" structural conditions. I spent over two years from 1989 to 1991 as a participant-observer in a range of groups in U.S. civil society: two recreational groups, both at a country-western dance club and fraternal organization; and a network of volunteer groups, including,

with most intensive scrutiny, an anti-drugs group and a PTA-style organization; and two activist groups – an anti-toxics group and a disarmament group. I picked these groups because advocates of democracy have long looked to groups that work on small, local issues as potential schools for wider political concern; I wanted to know what happened within these groups that evoked, or curtailed, public concern for the greater good. Of course, I did not expect these groups to devote much time to publicly-minded political discussion (which I define not as a topic but as a style of talking that implies connection to the wider world), but I was interested in whether and how political conversation ever happened, and whether groups seemed actively to avoid political conversation.

In all the groups, I did whatever other regular group members did: go to meetings, hearings, demonstrations, raffles, track meets, fairs, parades, fashion shows, rodeos, theme parks, and parties. I listened to participants' interactions with each other in a wide range of contexts, and to their interactions with the institutions that surrounded their groups – social service agencies that worked with the volunteers, government agencies that dealt with activists, country-western commercial culture that surrounded recreation group members. I was also a participant-observer among local reporters, and I analyzed news stories. The larger study shows how citizens made fine, relentless distinctions between what was sayable in one context and another: citizens sounded more public-minded in casual or intimate contexts than in public contexts; the wider the audience, the narrower were the ideas citizens could express. This article focusses mainly on interviews, but without the understanding that came from fieldwork, the interviews would not have made sense. I heard the "close to home" refrain over and over from volunteers, until I could predict responses to my interview questions: in other words, until the "category was saturated," to use a standard criterion for feeling satisfied, as an observer, that one has indeed found a pattern.

Power, Emotions, and Talk in the Production of Limited Horizons

Clue #1: Intuiting powerlessness: "What am I gonna do – bomb the place?"

The most obvious clue to interpreting these expressions of self-interest is the unmistakable connection between participants' expressions of self-interest and their seemingly realistic assessment of their own power. In the anti-drugs group interview, Pete described the relation between the "problems of the world" and self-interest:

I know there are things out there that affect me, you know, they, uh, bother me, but I guess I – my first priority is my home and my immediate surroundings and I'm not anxious to go out and solve the problems of the world. I guess it's just my personality, I guess. I knew someone in college who just could not . . . who saw all these problems and took them on as "personal," as her personal responsibility to solve all these things [he describes her briefly, saying it made her miserable to be so overwhelmed]. Of course, everyone would love to, if they had the power themselves, to stop war or end drug abuse or whatever, they'd do it, but obviously there's a *feeling of impotence* [my emphasis] when you're dealing with issues like that. Boils down to just, "find the opportunity in your life to try to make a difference, even if it's a small one."

A moment later in the conversation, he refers to this statement, summarizing it this way: "That gets back to – if I'm gonna actually expend energy to alter my lifestyle to affect one of these things, I'm probably gonna expend it where it's closer to home." The way he himself summarized the long, earlier statement shows his method for actively, imperceptibly translating "a feeling of impotence" into a feeling of empowerment on small issues "close to home." This was to rename that feeling of impotence as a lack of concern. "Close to home" and "for my children" was a package for a cluster of ideas about caring, power, and truth. Animals, like the whales stuck in Alaska, drugs and schools were "close to home." Nuclear war, the local nuclear battleship station, the local protest against U.S. policy in Central America, the local proposed toxic incinerator, and the local oil and chemical spills and explosions were not.

Members of the high school parent group used the same vocabulary, gracefully transmogrifying a feeling of impotence into a feeling of empowerment on issues labelled "close to home," and "in my interest," and "for the children." In the group interview, Danielle said, "really, I'm involved because my kids are here." Elaine said it next:

All my efforts are geared – I will get involved in anything that involves kids. . . . So I'll join committees like the Just Say No committee in Amargo, that you know, for sure, is the issue of drugs, but, you know, my view, really is it's an issue about kids.

Whenever I mentioned that all the groups I studied said they were involved "for the children," volunteers would reconsider the phrase for just a moment, say that indeed anything could be considered to be "close to home" and "for the children," and then, just moments later, all would revert to the "close to home," "for the children" discourse. This vocabulary of self-interest was so automatic, volunteers could not extricate themselves from it even when they rationally knew that it did not adequately describe their motives.

This gerrymandered engagement might seem easy to explain. In appearing rationally self-interested, volunteers might appear to confirm the idea that people are "rational actors," that is, people who will bestir themselves to community action only when they think that time invested will be worth the personal payoff, and only when they cannot easily hitch a "free ride" to that personal payoff on other people's backs.

But if volunteers were rationally calculating where to invest scarce energy, it was a peculiar kind of calculation: as will become more apparent below, the *goal* was to *feel* empowered; they had to forget that there were wide arenas in which they did feel powerless. If the work they did to divvy up the world into "close to home/do-able" and "not close to home/not do-able" had been conscious, it would not have had the desired effect, of allowing them to feel hopeful, powerful, and free. This is an unusual kind of calculation that works only when actors can forget they did the calculation. Instead of calculating individually, volunteers relied on a culturally standard, automatic second nature that taught them how to translate feelings of impotence into feelings of efficacy. . . .

A second explanation of volunteers' speech would shift volunteers' sense of power and powerlessness onto the level of culture instead of the level of individual con-

scious calculation, by saying that after years of political domination, volunteers may have created a culture of silence, too hopeless even to voice feelings of outrage, too powerless even to formulate their own interests even to themselves. . . .

The idea of hegemony rightly treats people as members of cultures, who are doing their best to make sense of discouraging circumstances, even if it means turning their backs on politics. It treats political experience as a convoluted, uncalculating, historically specific, inherently cultural, and interactive response to power and powerlessness.

But we can refine the concept of hegemony, here, by asking: how do citizens actively explain their powerlessness? Volunteers' self-interest talk did indeed respond to powerlessness, but calling it simply "a response to powerlessness" is not enough. If there is no exit from the political world, then political silence must be as active and as colorful as a bright summer shadow. Developing a sense of togetherness happened in reference to a sense of powerlessness, but was not just a reaction to it; cultural work acknowledges powerlessness but does not stop there. If the ways of avoiding political engagement are potentially infinite, then why did packaging gloomy feelings inside of professions of "self-interest" feel better to volunteers? Thus, the next clue asks how *this* language in particular made the world seem to make sense, by cheering volunteers up, making a certain emotional tone possible in volunteer groups.

Clue #2: "You can have more of an impact uh... at least you feel like you can": Feeling rules in public spaces

Volunteers *wanted* to believe that all people are aware of their own desires, are self-interested, and invest their energies wisely. Volunteers themselves strenuously tried to confirm this rational model of humanity, even if it meant making extraordinary claims about human nature:

Carolyn: I don't think anyone does anything that is not going to benefit them in some form or another, or there'd be no point. . . .

Pete: Whether we admit it or not . . . someone like Gandhi, you know, he may be the pinnacle of altruism, but he was doin his stuff for his own people. [Murmurs of agreement. . . .]

Lisa: And he felt good about what he did [implying that "feeling good" is a self-interested benefit].

This language helped the volunteers to convince themselves of something that they earnestly wanted to believe. When I asked the forced-choice survey question, "How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?" one typical volunteer said,

Most of the time. Well, at least I'd like to *think* it's most of the time. Of course, I'm not so sure it really is. But I hope it *is*. So, I'd say "most of the time." Yes, put "most of the time."

Notice – neither yes nor no nor undecided was the most “real” belief here. The belief *included* an effort at convincing herself. In the interview with Carolyn and her eighteen year old son, the son made less of an effort. Each time he said that people do not get involved because they don’t think it will have an effect, his mother gently corrected him, saying that people just did not have enough time. Similarly, typical volunteers responded to the question, “Can a person like you make a difference?” by saying “Yes,” with an “at least I hope so” tagged on. . . .

When a volunteer expressed a criticism of the election process on one election day, she sounded extremely apologetic about it. She did not express her worries in the meeting, but whispered them before the meeting, while standing outside with the banquet-sized coffeemaker, waiting for the janitor to unlock the door to the meeting room. During the meeting, a fellow volunteer kept whispering to her, saying, “Don’t worry, I’m sure you’ll get over it,” and asking, “Don’t you feel better now?” The problem had to be treated as if it were just “her mood,” not a problem with the political system. Volunteers did not want to be too critical, too “cynical”; if the government and corporations suggested that citizens could get involved in solving the drug problem, then volunteers were willing to cooperate, even though drug abuse *could* have been considered a harder issue to solve than some environmental problems. But the volunteers meant only the consensual and non-structural aspects of drug abuse, home, children, and families. They did not want to be discouraged by problems that seemed out of their control, and the vocabulary of “close to home” helped them feel in control of “home.” . . .

Being a volunteer meant not only convincing oneself that good citizenship was possible, but convincing other people as well, and creating public contexts in which regular people could get together to work on community projects. It meant convincing people that good citizenship is possible today, right now, in the society as it is, not in some dreamworld. Rather than try to change the institutions that kept them feeling powerless (because that could require too much depressing discussion), volunteers tried to change their feelings. Good citizenship was primarily a matter of *feeling good* about the community and nation, and showing one’s neighbors that people care and can be effective; cultivating the feeling of “having an impact” was, in an important way, *the same* for them as “hav(ing) . . . an an impact.” As a refrain went, “if everyone cared . . .” Working on feelings was, itself, the goal . . .

There are varied cultural rules for this cultivation and expression of feeling. For the unempowered volunteer trying to feel confident that democracy is working according to its promise – as in Arlie Hochschild’s examples of an unhappy bride trying to feel joy, a happy funeral attendee trying to suppress his glee, and a blasé star halfback trying to “psych himself up at a game” – there is “emotion work,” that bridges the

discrepancy, between what ones does feel and what one wants to feel (which is, in turn, affected by what one thinks one ought to feel in such a situation). In response, the individual may try to eliminate the pinch by working on feeling.¹

Different groups required different emotion work, different relations to feelings of powerlessness, different relations to inconsistency, doubt, ambivalence, rough edges in general. And the different groups’ demands for emotion work were context-

specific. Volunteers required cheer in some situations, and could express doubts in others. The effort at being smoothly upbeat differed from one group to the next, and one context to the next.

The concept of emotion rules throws light on how hard volunteers worked to muster unequivocally upbeat feelings in group contexts. But a question remains: why did volunteers assume that the way to be upbeat was to avoid making the connection between the local and the global, instead of talking about their worries more openly, or complaining or venting outrage? After all, the volunteers were not peasants who could starve if they offended their lords, or victims of direct censorship who had to hide their criticism of the government; they believed that they *were* free to speak their minds. So why did they assume that appearing unequivocal and happy was so urgent? Exposing the rough edges of one’s thoughts has often been considered the essence of democratic citizenship; George Herbert Mead, for example, would have said that good, active citizenship is *supposed* to be confusing, that thought itself is argument – that in the public realm, consistency is death.² The question is how willing people are to exhibit the rough edges, doubts, and challenges in public. If the need to appear unequivocally upbeat is not just a fact of human nature, and no direct censorship prevented volunteers from voicing doubts, then how did they come to assume that the way to gain a sense of control was to avoid talk, avoid debate, when other groups gained a sense of mastery by talking? What was it about political talk itself that they feared?

Clue #3: “That’s rhetoric”: The value of talk itself

Clara (a schools volunteer): [A social problem is close to home] if it affects you personally and your family . . . You can hold your opinions about what a country can do, or can’t do, about a situation, but *that’s rhetoric* . . . I don’t really think a person can really make a difference unless they have the *power at hand*.

Volunteers assumed that talking politics would not accomplish anything positive, it would only scare members away and undermine hope. The easy-seeming explanation of “self-interest” made apathy about un-doable problems seem self-evident, not in need of explanation or discussion. The explanation did not just *appeal* to the American tradition of individualism. It *embodied* individualism, as a practice and not just a set of beliefs, by allowing volunteers to assume that their goals were not a product of interaction and could not benefit from group discussion. Everyone was assumed always already to have personal opinions, before discussion or interaction. According to this folk theory of language, if all people are is naturally out for themselves, citizens don’t need to talk (they just need to act on their beliefs or interests), and democracy is working just fine.

Volunteers assumed that citizens’ talk itself would change neither individuals’ opinions nor the political world. With different assumptions about how and where talk matters could come different emotion rules. For example, Patricia Waseliewski³ shows that a pivotal moment in the life of a feminist group is when women learn to value anger, to talk about the causes of their anger, thus allowing righteous, collective anger to become a lever for critical grassroots action instead of a shameful,

private sentiment. Given volunteers' low valuation of talk itself, the best way to maintain faith and hope was to avoid expressing discouraging, critical, "cynical" thoughts and feelings in public.

Thus, in Parent League meetings, volunteers actively avoided talking about the race problems in the high school, the lack of funds for library books, heating, music, and theater supplies, and other potentially troubling topics that newcomers tried to raise. On the one hand, volunteers wanted to encourage these potential new members, but, on the other hand, they did not want to risk the sense of discouragement that wide-ranging discussion could bring. For example, the local NAACP representative came to one meeting of the Parent League to tell the group that a teacher had made racist jokes and that skinheads were recruiting on the schoolgrounds at lunchtime. He suggested getting more parents involved in the Parent League, so they could discuss these problems publicly. The parent volunteers (who were not, incidentally, all white, but who did share the distinctive "volunteer culture" I am describing in this article) barely responded, except to say that the NAACP representative should not underestimate them, because they "made efficient use of small numbers" of people, and they cited a very successful fundraiser the group held. When teachers came to meetings trying to drum up discussion about funding for theater lights, or about limiting senior year expenses for activities like the prom and the class picnic (that all together added up to over a thousand dollars), volunteers, who were usually extremely well-organized in their meetings, would wander in and out, play with their pens, and fall unusually silent. In an anti-drugs group meeting, Julie (a former anti-nuclear activist – her confrontation with feelings of powerlessness was not the only thing that made her unusual – she also sometimes tried to push volunteers to be a little more debate oriented than they were) asked what she could say when people argued against the group's plans; there was total silence following her question, until Julie brought up a logistical question. The consensus was that talking was not the point. Members had not explicitly decided not to talk; it was just part of their practical cultural work in the group context.

The ability to express broad political engagement systematically changed from one context to the next. Behind the scenes, but not in meetings, Danielle could say that it was really a disgrace that a country as rich as ours had homeless people; she said that the school should not make parents pay for kids to play in the school's swing band, and that Republican-sponsored cutbacks had harmed the school, and more. But she never spoke like this in the group context. Behind the scenes, she spoke enthusiastically about her work with the school district to plan ecologically-sound landscaping for a new school, but when she got to the meeting of the parents group, the other parents translated her excitement about the general principle of ecological groundskeeping into "preventing hayfever in local kids." Behind the scenes, another volunteer was a very involved union activist, talked about connections between corporate flight and government policies, and had supported Jesse Jackson for president in an earlier election. But in meetings, he was very quiet and when he did speak, he sounded just like the others. Behind the scenes, Cora, the volunteer who confessed her feelings of cynicism while standing outside waiting for the janitor, offered quite a wide-ranging criticism and self-criticism session before entering the meeting: she said there were too many paid political consultants, too

few informed voters, too many non-voters; and to give added bite to her point about her cynicism, she exclaimed with chagrin that, for the first time, she had voted for the Democrat, *only* because he had done her a favor. . . .

Volunteers welcomed public-spirited talk, in its place; free-ranging talk was just out of place in everyday meetings and other public settings. Thus, after each group interview I conducted with volunteers, participants thanked me, saying they had never had the opportunity to talk about these things together, as a group, before. . . .

The point is that there was a *culture of political avoidance*, a common-sense understanding of what the act of talking politics itself means, not just that volunteers obeyed some natural urge to avoid disagreement.

With their taken-for-granted assessment of talk, volunteers did not simply think that talking about an undo-able social problem was a waste of time, either. It was immoral, because it could undermine their buoyant sense of the rightness of the world, by excluding "regular" people who are not always eloquent, do not have equal amounts of cultural capital, as Pierre Bourdieu⁴ would put it, and are not always eager to talk politics. As one Parent League member put it, "The way to get a volunteer is to ask, 'Who has a drill bit and can drill eight holes in this board next Saturday?' Someone will come who maybe never volunteered before, and then maybe they'll come again." *Beliefs about talk itself were key here* in setting the emotional tone, and in setting the boundaries of the "do-able" – beliefs about who talks, about what talk accomplishes, about where talk belongs, about when talk is "just rhetoric," or dangerous, or depressing, and beliefs about how regular people talk. The intellectual, emotional, and interactional dimensions of cultural work are inseparable. . . .

[L]inguistic anthropologists investigate the idea that cultural assumptions about talk itself embody implicit understandings of power, politics, and selfhood. But they usually treat these talk-cultures as customary, traditional, time-honored, habitual responses to particular local histories in longstanding communities. How do citizens establish cultures of talk in a multicultural, transient, potentially global polity, in which citizens often do not even think that they know what is going on, who is in charge, how to act in a diverse setting, where the power is, or what kind of power it is? In an area like the one described here, we can more clearly hear how different groups can variously interpret, reproduce, and challenge, the "same" institutional, political field, thus more clearly specifying the work of political culture itself.

And so, we are back to the question of power, that started this round robin of explanations: part of why volunteers assumed they were powerless was that they assumed that citizens' talk was "just rhetoric," not a source of power. With a new reckoning of the value of talk itself would have come a new source of power. . . .

Conclusion: Power, Emotions and Politeness in an Imperfect World

Taking volunteers' professions of "small-mindedness" at face value would be a mistake. Expressions of political disconnection worked hard; people exerted themselves to keep the wider world at bay. Treating these expressions of apathy – and treating beliefs in general – this way helps specify just what it is *about* beliefs that

makes them matter for public life. All along the way, I have entertained possible alternate interpretations of volunteers' use of the "close to home" language: interpretations that highlight power (that they were rational actors; or that a cross-contextual hegemonic process prevented volunteers from noticing problems); emotions or other inner psychic processes (that volunteers were avoiding cognitive dissonance or numbing their feelings); and culturally patterned interactional styles (that volunteers feared voicing anxiety, ambivalence, getting angry, or asking questions in public because of their low valuation of public talk itself). These "structural," "psychological," and "cultural" levels of analysis do not correspond to their separate objects of study ("the structure," "the individual," and "the cultural institutions") but rather, are mutually implicated and inextricable. All of these explanations call forth something that the others offer; each fills in what others leave uncharted, each layer is contingent on the others.

Understanding the tortured, twisted use of "close to home" helps show how these explanations are connected; the interconnections could help us interpret other public languages, as well. What if the things we call "beliefs" are always so equivocal? Then hope and hopelessness, apathy and engagement would not seem so far apart; they would always be intertwined, actively making sense of a world that doesn't.

By showing how hard this apparent apathy is to produce, the concept of cultural work reveals the kernel of political hope embedded in volunteers' strenuous expressions of self-interest and political disengagement. At the same time that it leaves more room for hope than other approaches, the idea of cultural work seriously acknowledges people's sense of political powerlessness. While politicians all over the globe extoll the virtues of voluntary associations like the ones portrayed here – treating them as a panacea for all social ills, from lack of trust, to crime, to poverty, to economic inefficiency – this article shows how hidden obstructions to citizens' communication can fuel this prevalent language of political disconnection.

In an imperfect world, each of the groups described here responded dexterously and creatively to powerlessness; each groups' response lacked different aspects of the democratic ideal. *But all retained some aspect of it.* I can put this even more strongly: the effort at retaining some aspect of it *included* an implicit recognition of its failings. The effort at retaining a faith that the world makes sense, is just and democratic, included acknowledgement of the ways in which the world does not make sense, is not just, not democratic.

The people portrayed here worked hard to appear politically disconnected and self-interested. They did not want to be apathetic and self-interested, but feared that expressing self-interest was the only way to retain faith in the possibility of democracy. Cynics', activists', and volunteers' cultural work opened up different kinds of spaces for publicly-minded political engagement. The point is to draw these openings out; that is what theorists, politicians, journalists, and activists should be doing, instead of just glumly taking citizens' expressions of apathy at their word.

Notes

- 1 Arlie Hochschild, "Emotion work, feeling rules, and social structure," *American Journal of Sociology* 85/3 (1979): 551–75. Harry Frankfurt makes a similar point, when he says

that the essence of human desire is that it is not just raw appetite, but culturally, morally determined "desires about desires" [as Albert Hirschman summarizes in *Shifting Involvements: Private Interest and Public Action* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982)]. See also Amartya Sen's "Rational fools: A critique of the behavioural foundations of economic theory" in Jane Mansbridge, editor, *Beyond Self-Interest* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 25–43, 39.

- 2 George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1964); see also John Dewey, *The Public and its Problems* (Denver: Allan Swallow, 1927). Michael Billing calls this "the spirit of contradiction," in *Arguing and Thinking: A Rhetorical Approach to Social Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
- 3 Patricia Wasielewski, "Emotion as a resource" (paper given at American Sociological Association meetings, San Francisco, 1989).
- 4 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, translated by Richard Nice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984).

Editor's Notes on Further Reading

Eliasoph on Political Avoidance

Many students of political culture and participatory democracy puzzle about the conditions encouraging involvement or apathy, and about explanations for declining political participation. Nina Eliasoph argues that disengagement is actively produced: the appearance of apathy is culturally patterned by norms of what counts as proper feeling and norms about what talking should do. Her extended study, in *Avoiding Politics: How Americans Produce Apathy in Everyday Life* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998) compares different ways of talking in the different contexts of volunteer, activist, and recreational groups, providing a deeply grounded sense of both the ideals and the realities of the contemporary public sphere. See also her "Making a Fragile Public: a Talkcentered Study of Citizenship and Power," *Sociological Theory* 14 (1996): 262–89 on the power of creating legitimate interactional styles.

This work builds on a thriving tradition of theory and qualitative investigation into the possibilities and realities of public participation, extending from Tocqueville to Habermas and beyond. Some related studies of cultures of collective action include those of Lichterman, excerpted this volume; Penny Edgell Becker, *Congregations in Conflict: Cultural Models of Local Religious Life* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Mary Patillo-McCoy, "Church Culture as a Strategy of Action in the Black Community," *American Sociological Review* 63 (1998): 767–84; Steven Hart, *What Does the Lord Require?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); William Gamson, *Talking Politics* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Rick Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action, and Contemporary American Workers* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988); and Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven Tipton, *Habits of the Heart* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985). For more on volunteering in American culture see Robert Wuthnow, *Acts of Compassion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991) and Ann Swidler, "Inequality and American Culture: The Persistence of Voluntarism," pp. 294–314 in Gary Marks and Larry Diamond, eds., *Reexamining Democracy: Essays in Honor of Seymour Martin Lipset* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1992).

Methodologically, Eliasoph demonstrates the importance for cultural sociology of ethnographic research in natural settings (cf. Geertz excerpt, this volume). She argues that surveys cannot generate valid information about aspects of culture which are a matter of interactional

context, and since participatory democracy is intrinsically tied to interactional context, studies of political culture are particularly susceptible to validity questions if not conducted in natural settings. See also Nina Eliasoph, "Political Culture and the Presentation of a Political Self: A Study of the Public Sphere in the Spirit of Erving Goffman," *Theory and Society* 19 (1990): 465-94; Pierre Bourdieu, "Public Opinion Does Not Exist," in Armand Mattelart and Seth Siegelau, eds., *Communication and Class Struggle*, vol. 1 (NY: International General, 1979); and Pierre Bourdieu, "Opinion Polls: A 'Science' Without a Scientist," pp. 168-74 in *In Other Words: Essays Toward a Reflexive Sociology*, trans. Matthew Adamson (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990). The work also models the "extended case method," linking micro- and macro-sociological analysis; see Michael Burawoy, "The Extended Case Method," *Sociological Theory* 16 (1998): 4-33, and Nina Eliasoph and Paul Lichterman, "'We Begin With Our Favorite Theory': Reconstructing the Extended Case Method," *Sociological Theory* 17 (1999): 228-34.

14 How Culture Works: Perspectives from Media Studies on the Efficacy of Symbols

Michael Schudson

How does culture work? That is, what influence do particular symbols have on what people think and how they act?

An anthropologist might find the question bizarre, one that by the asking reveals a fundamental misunderstanding. Culture is not something that works or fails to work. It is not something imposed on or done to a person; it is constitutive of the person. It is the precondition and the condition of human-ness. The meanings people incorporate in their lives are not separate from their activities; activities are made of meanings. Culture, as Clifford Geertz says, "is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly - that is, thickly - described."¹ Insofar as this is true, the question of the "impact" of culture is not answerable because culture is not separable from social structure, economics, politics, and other features of human activity.

And yet, even Clifford Geertz and other symbolic anthropologists are far from having given up efforts at causal attribution when it comes to culture. If we think of culture as the symbolic dimension of human activity and if we conceive its study, somewhat arbitrarily, as the study of discrete symbolic objects (art, literature, sermons, ideologies, advertisements, maps, street signs) and how they function in social life, then the question of what work culture does and how it does it is not self-evidently foolish. Indeed, it can then be understood as a key question in sociology, anthropology, and history, closely related to the central question in Western social thought since Marx (as James Fernandez has asserted) - the debate between cultural idealism and historical materialism. It is the problem raised by Max Weber's essay on the Protestant ethic: do systems of ideas or beliefs have causal significance in human affairs over against material forces? It is the problem suggested by the debates in Marxism about the relation of "superstructure" to "base."...

In history and the social sciences, answers to the question of the efficacy of cultural symbols or objects cluster around two poles. At one end, cultural objects are seen as enormously powerful in shaping human action - even if the cultural objects themselves are shown to be rather simply derived from the interests of powerful social groups. Ideas or symbols or propaganda successfully manipulate people. "Ideology" (or the somewhat more slippery term "hegemony") is viewed as a potent agent of powerful ruling groups, successfully molding the ideas and expectations and presuppositions of the general population and making people deferent and pliable. This

position, which in its Marxist formulation has been dubbed "the dominant ideology thesis," is equally consistent with what David Laitin identifies as a conventional, social-system, rather than social-action, view, or the "first face" of culture.²

At the other end, concepts of culture cluster around a more optimistic view of human activity, a voluntaristic sense in which culture is seen not as a program but as a "tool kit" (in Ann Swidler's words, although she is not herself a tool-kit theorist) or "equipment for living" (in Kenneth Burke's).³ Culture is not a set of ideas imposed but a set of ideas and symbols available for use. Individuals select the meanings they need for particular purposes and occasions from the limited but nonetheless varied cultural menu a given society provides. In this view, culture is a resource for social action more than a structure to limit social action. It serves a variety of purposes because symbols are "polysemic" and can be variously interpreted; because communication is inherently ambiguous and people will read into messages what they please; or because meaning is at the service of individual interest. Symbols, not people, are pliable. This is what Laitin calls the "second face" of culture in which culture is largely an ambiguous set of symbols that are usable as a resource for rational actors in society pursuing their own interests. Taken to its logical extreme, this position assigns culture no efficacy in social action at all. It suggests that while people may need a symbolic object to define, explain, or galvanize a course of action they have already decided on an appropriate object will always be found to clothe the pre-existing intention. . . .

To understand the efficacy of culture, it is essential to recognize simultaneously that (1) human beings make their own history and (2) they do not make it according to circumstances of their own choosing.

It is not surprising that a good many thinkers have sought some kind of middle position that recognizes both the constraining force of culture (thereby supporting the social mold or hegemonic position) and the instrumental and voluntaristic uses of culture by individuals (thus lending weight to the tool-kit position). . . .

I want to pursue a middle position myself here. . . . I focus especially on the influence of the mass media because this is the field I am most familiar with. I am most of all interested in the direct influence of cultural objects. Does TV lead to a more violent society or a more fearful society? Do romance novels buy off potential feminist unrest? Does advertising make people materialistic? Do cockfights in Bali provide an emotional training ground for the Balinese? Did Harriet Beecher Stowe help start the Civil War? Did Wagner give aid and comfort to the rise of Fascism? These are naive questions. They are, nonetheless, recurrent questions, popular questions, and publicly significant ones. (Should advertisements on children's television programs be banned? Should pornography be forbidden? What impact do sex education classes have? Or warning labels on cigarette packages?) There are a variety of more subtle questions concerning the role of culture in social life, but these questions of whether "exposure" to certain symbols or messages in various media actually lead people to change how they think about the world or act in it are powerful and central. . . .

Does culture "work"? Instead of asking whether it does, I ask about the conditions – both of the cultural object and its environment – that are likely to make the culture or cultural object work more or less. I will try to do this without bowdlerizing the concept of culture – but I recognize a tendency in this enterprise to reduce culture to

information, to neglect the emotional and psychological dimensions of meaning, to ignore culture that is unconsciously transmitted or received, to focus on the most discrete and propositional forms of culture. The examples I present here draw primarily from media studies and so do not represent all of what one might mean by "culture," but I think they set the general questions clearly.

I want to examine five dimensions of the potency of a cultural object. I call these, for the sake of alliteration, retrievability, rhetorical force, resonance, institutional retention, and resolution.

Retrievability

If culture is to influence a person, it must reach the person. An advertisement is of little use to the manufacturer if a consumer never sees it; it is equally of little use if the person sees the ad but cannot locate the product in a store or find out how to order it by mail. Advertising agencies spend time and energy learning to place ads where they are most likely to be seen by the people most likely to be in the market for the product they announce. Cosmetic ads appear more frequently in *Vogue* than in *Field & Stream* because more cosmetic purchasers read *Vogue* than read *Field & Stream*.

In the language of marketing, we can call this "reach," in the language of cognitive psychology, we can refer to it as "availability," but the general term I will use, to suggest more easily the sociological dimension of the phenomenon, is "retrievability." . . .

From the individual's perspective, some elements of experience are more readily drawn upon as bases for action than other elements. From the perspective of someone who would seek to manipulate cultural objects to advantage, the question is how to make some key elements of culture more available to audiences.

What puts a cultural object in the presence of (and therefore potentially in the mind and memory of) an individual in an audience? Sociologically, there are a variety of dimensions of retrievability. A cultural object or cultural information is more *economically* retrievable if it is cheaper for people to retrieve. Marketers know that price is a barrier to customers' trying out a new product, so they distribute free samples or announce low introductory price offers, reducing the economic barrier to direct, experiential knowledge of the product. Libraries send bookmobiles to neighborhoods to attract readers who would find getting to the nearest library inconvenient or expensive.

Culture can be socially as well as economically retrievable. Books in a library's general collection are socially more retrievable than books in the Rare Book Room where a person must go through a librarian and show some identification or announce a special purpose for examining a book. It is as much the etiquette of the Rare Book Room as its formal constraints that erects a barrier to its use. Working-class parents get more information about their children's public schools from school newsletters than from parent-teacher conferences while middle-class parents make better use of the conferences. The working-class parent often feels socially awkward or inadequate talking with teachers and finds it difficult to breach the social barrier to the school system's personnel directly.⁴

There are other categories of retrievability – ways in which a part of culture becomes more or less accessible to the awareness, mind, or memory of an individual.

All the categories concern the retrievability of culture either in space or in time. The examples of social and economic retrievability I have already mentioned have to do with the availability of culture in space – whether a cultural object or piece of information is geographically in the presence of the individual. There are also ways that cultural retrievability may be expanded or limited temporally. A written message lasts longer than a verbal one, other things being equal (which is not to say it will be as rhetorically potent as the verbal message). If a cultural object is connected to a culturally salient event institutionalized on the cultural calendar, it will be more available – not only more present, that is, but more easily remembered over time. . . .

Rhetorical Force

. . . Different cultural objects have different degrees of rhetorical force or effectiveness. What makes one novel more powerful than another, one advertisement more memorable than another, one ritual more moving than another, is a matter that does not afford easy answers. . . .

If the cultural object is taken to be a communicative act, there may be a rhetorical aspect to each of its analytically distinct features. There may be a rhetorical aspect of the sender (higher-status speakers will be more persuasive to an audience than lower-status speakers); of the receiving audience (messages that flatter the audience without arousing suspicion of the speaker's insincerity will be more persuasive than messages that do not flatter); of the medium (people in a given culture may find one medium, say, television, generally more credible than another, say, radio); of the form or format (a whispered confidence is more persuasive than a public, joking insinuation); of the cultural situation (a painting in a museum more easily wins attention and respect than a painting in an antique store or on a bathroom wall); and of the message itself.

This last factor is the most slippery; indeed, some would be sure to deny that a cultural object or message can ever have such a thing as rhetorical force in its own right, separate from its relationship to the audience and its relationship to the cultural field it is a part of. . . . There is something, even if that something is far from being everything, to a concept of art or craft, something to the idea that one person or group may create a cultural object more vivid, funny, appealing, graphic, dramatic, suspenseful, interesting, beautiful, stunning than another. . . .

And yet it is equally true that cultural objects do not exist by themselves. Each new one enters a field already occupied. If it is to gain attention, it must do so by displacing others or by entering into a conversation with others. The power of a cultural object or message exists by virtue of contrastive relationships to other objects in its field. A new painting can be understood only as it follows from or departs from traditions of painting that have gone before, both in the artist's own work and in the history of art to which the artist's efforts are some kind of new response. . . .

Resonance

The importance of the conventions of the subcommunity brings me to the third feature of cultural power: the degree to which the cultural object is resonant with the

audience. A rhetorically effective object must be relevant to and resonant with the life of the audience. This is a simple and familiar point. It is made, for instance, by George Mosse when he argues in a study of the power of political ideology and ritual that rulers cannot successfully impose culture on people unless the political symbolism they choose connects to underlying native traditions.⁵ So far as this is true, an analysis of cultural power inevitably leans toward the second face of culture, the "tool-kit" sense of culture as a set of resources from which people choose, depending on their "interests." . . .

People not only attend to media selectively but perceive selectively from what they attend to. Obviously, then, people normally participate in culture-making; as some literary theorists would say today, readers are co-authors, "writing" the texts they read. This can be taken too far, I think – and does go too far if it falls altogether into the tool-kit view of culture – but there is a great deal of truth in it.

For producers of mass media culture, the issue of "resonance" will be experienced as a central problem. Whether a new television show, book, or record album will be a "hit" is notoriously difficult for the "culture industry" to predict. The broader the audience a message reaches, the less likely the message is to be specifically relevant to a given individual receiving it. . . .

The relevance of a cultural object to its audience, its utility, if you will, is a property not only of the object's content or nature and the audience's interest in it but of the position of the object in the cultural tradition of the society the audience is a part of. That is, the uses to which an audience puts a cultural object are not necessarily personal or idiosyncratic; the needs or interests of an audience are socially and culturally constituted. What is "resonant" is not a matter of how "culture" connects to individual "interests" but a matter of how culture connects to interests that are themselves constituted in a cultural frame. . . .

The "culture" that resonates or fails to resonate is itself no more autonomous than interests: it has as much an interest-driven history as individual interests have a culture-generated constitution. Barbara Herrnstein Smith makes this point with reference to Homer:

The endurance of a classic canonical author such as Homer. . . owes not to the alleged transcultural or universal value of his works but, on the contrary, to the continuity of their circulation in a particular culture. Repeatedly cited and recited, translated, taught and imitated, and thoroughly enmeshed in the network of intertextuality that continuously *constitutes* the high culture of the orthodoxly educated population of the West. . . that highly variable entity we refer to as "Homer" recurrently enters our experience in relation to a large number and variety of our interests and thus can perform a large number of various functions for us and obviously has performed them for many of us over a good bit of the history of our culture.⁶

. . . One of the reasons a symbol becomes powerful is that – sometimes more or less by chance – it has been settled on, it has won out over other symbols as a representation of some valued entity and it comes to have an aura. The aura generates its own power and what might originally have been a very modest advantage (or even lucky coincidence) of a symbol becomes, with the accumulation of the aura of tradition over time, a major feature.

Relevance or resonance, then, is not a private relation between cultural object and individual, not even a social relation between cultural object and audience, but a public and cultural relation among object, tradition, and audience.

Institutional Retention

Culture interpenetrates with institutions as well as with interests. It exists not only as a set of meanings people share but as a set of concrete social relations in which meaning is enacted, in which it is, in a sense, tied down . . .

A good many cultural objects may be widely available, rhetorically effective, and culturally resonant, but fail of institutionalization. If they never turn up in a school classroom, never become a part of common reference, never enter into the knowledge formally required for citizenship or job-holding or social acceptability, their power will be limited. A "fad" is the phenomenon that epitomizes this situation: a fad is a cultural object that makes its way into public awareness and use, is widely adopted, and then fades completely or almost completely from view.

Powerful culture is reinforced in and through social institutions that have carrots and sticks of their own. Some culture – say, popular entertainment – is only modestly institutionalized. For certain social groups – notably, teenagers – familiarity with popular entertainment is a key element in social life and there are serious sanctions for lack of knowledge or lack of caring about it. For most adults, popular entertainment is framed as "this is fun" or, in other words, "this does not matter." That is quite different from the social-cultural framework for "serious" art where the culture – and a whole series of powerful institutions from schools to museums to government funding agencies – tell us "this is relevant." It may be fun but it is fun that bears on the meaning of an individual's life – or, so the frame tells us, it should . . .

The more thoroughly a cultural object is institutionalized – in the educational system or economic and social system or in the dynamics of family life, the more opportunity there is for it to exercise influence. This is not the same thing as retrievability. If an object is retrievable, it can still be disregarded with impunity; if an object is institutionally retained, there are sanctions, social or economic or legal, for disregard.

Resolution

Some elements in culture are more likely to influence action than others because they are better situated at a point of action or because they are by nature directives for action. An advertisement is a cultural text of high "resolution" in that it normally tells the audience precisely what to do to respond. It says: go out and buy. Books of advice or instruction – Jane Fonda's exercise books, a cookbook, Dr. Spock, the Boy Scout Handbook also give precise directions and can usually be readily enacted. Sacred texts are highly resolved in another sense – they are performative cultural acts, that is, the very act of reading them is itself part of the desired response; reading the book is itself an enactment of the devotional behaviour the text urges. But most cultural texts are not imperatives in so clear a fashion or, indeed, in any fashion. They

may be powerful in a variety of ways but their low "resolution" means that they are unlikely to stimulate action in concrete, visible, immediate, and measurable ways. (It may be that culture achieves its end precisely when it keeps action from happening; the aim of art may be to inflict waiting and reflection, and Auden's claim that "poetry makes nothing happen" might be read – though I do not think he intended this – as a strong claim about something poetry does, not a statement that poetry does nothing.)

James Lemert has studied what he calls "mobilizing information" in the news media. Mobilizing information tells the reader how to respond in action to the news story. A news story on a 4th of July parade might include information on the parade route. This is more likely to get someone to the parade than a story that gives no indication of how a person might actually observe the parade. The American news media have an unwritten policy that it is acceptable, even desirable, to print mobilizing information about topics on which there is a cultural consensus – the 4th of July parade or a charity drive at Christmas, but not to print mobilizing information about topics of controversy (the parade route for a political demonstration, for instance). The news media thereby choose a path of low resolution in a way that demobilizes or depoliticizes the public over issues of political controversy. This is another case where a cultural producer – here a news organization – acts to limit the direct cultural power of its own creation.⁷ . . .

To say that a cultural object is more powerful the more it is within reach, the more it is rhetorically effective, the more it resonates with existing opinions and structures (without disappearing entirely into them so as to have no independent influence to exert), the more thoroughly it is retained in institutions, and the more highly resolved it is toward action, helps provide a language for discussing the differences in influence of different aspects of culture.

Notes

- 1 Clifford Geertz. *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 14.
- 2 The "dominant ideology thesis" is the phrase of Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hill, and Bryan S. Turner, *The Dominant Ideology Thesis* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1980). They identify the thesis with the work of Jürgen Habermas, Herbert Marcuse, Ralph Miliband, Nicos Poulantzas, and in some form "in almost all forms of modern Marxism" (1). David Laitin's position is reported in David D. Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture: Politics and Religious Change among the Yoruba* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).
- 3 Ann Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," *American Sociological Review* 51 (1986) 273–86. Kenneth Burke, "Literature as Equipment for Living," in Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 293–304.
- 4 Steve Chaffee, "The Public View of the Media as Carriers of Information Between School and Community," *Journalism Quarterly* 44 (Winter, 1967), 732.
- 5 George Mosse, "Caesarism, Circuses, and Monuments," *Journal of Contemporary History* 6 (1971), 167–82.
- 6 Barbara Herrnstein Smith, "Contingencies of Value," in Robert von Hallberg, *Canons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 35.

- 7 James B. Lemert, "News Context and the Elimination of Mobilizing Information An Experiment" *Journalism Quarterly* (Summer 1984) 243-9, 259. See also James B. Lemert, *Does Mass Communication Change Public Opinion After All? A New Approach to Effects Analysis* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1981), 117-60. News on crime has relatively slight influence on people's actions to keep from becoming crime victims because it so rarely provides concrete information on how to stay clear of crime. This is another example of the problem of resolution. See Tom R. Tylan et al., "Assessing the Risk of Crime Victimization: The Integration of Personal Victimization Experience and Socially Transmitted Information," *Journal of Social Issues* 40 (1984): 27-38.

Editor's Notes on Further Reading

Schudson on Effective Symbols

Under what conditions can particular elements of culture influence individuals and groups? Answers to this question link studies focusing on individual identities and practices, such as those in Part II, with studies of cultural production, the topic of Part III. Schudson's analysis of influential symbols points both to audience/symbol relations (rhetorical force, resonance, and resolution) and to institutional conditions (retrievability, institutional retention) as creating effectiveness in particular circumstances. In this volume, excerpts from the work of Kunda on organizational rituals, and Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, provide additional examples of how these factors might vary.

Different reflections on how elements of culture might affect identities and practices include Steve Dorné, "Cultural Conceptions of Human Motivation and Their Significance for Culture Theory," pp. 267-87 in Diana Crane, ed., *The Sociology of Culture* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994); Gary Alan Fine and Kent Sandstrom, "Ideology in Action: A Pragmatic Approach to a Contested Concept," *Sociological Theory* 11 (1993): 21-37; Bennett Berger, "Structure and Choice in the Sociology of Culture," *Theory and Society* 20 (1991): 1-20; Ann Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," *American Sociological Review* 51 (1986): 273-86; Gary Alan Fine, "Small Groups and Culture Creation: The Idioculture of Little League Baseball Teams," *American Sociological Review* 44 (1979): 733-45; Sherry Ortner, "On Key Symbols," *American Anthropologist* 75 (1973): 1338-46; and C. Wright Mills, "Situating Actions and Vocabularies of Motive," *American Sociological Review* 5 (1940): 904-13. More generally, focusing on features of cultural elements is one way of addressing a key issue in cultural theory, the question of whether, when and how culture is powerful. Some of the many other approaches to this question can be seen in excerpts from the work of Raymond Williams, Bourdieu, Swidler, Sewell and Wuthnow in this volume, and associated editor's notes; see also Karen Cerulo, "Identity Construction: New Issues, New Directions," *Annual Review of Sociology* 23 (1997): 385-409.

Schudson's approach is grounded in his research on media and public life: see for instance his *The Power of News* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); *Watergate in American Memory: How We Remember, Forget, and Reconstruct the Past* (New York: Basic Books, 1992); and *Advertising, the Uneasy Persuasion: Its Dubious Impact on American Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1984). For further discussion of media effects see the selection by Hunt, and accompanying editor's note in this volume.

Part III

Cultural Production: Institutional Fields