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# The Honored Outsider: Raymond Aron as Sociologist

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Peter Baehr<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

Raymond Aron (1905–1983) assumed many guises over a long and fruitful career: journalist, polemicist, philosopher of history, counselor to political leaders and officials, theorist of nuclear deterrence and international relations. He was also France's most notable sociologist. While Aron had especially close ties with Britain, a result of his days in active exile there during the Second World War, he was widely appreciated in the United States too. His book *Main Currents in Sociological Thought* was hailed a masterpiece; more generally, Aron's books were extensively reviewed in the *American Journal of Sociology*, the *American Sociological Review* (in earlier days, it hosted a review section), *Contemporary Sociology*, and *Social Forces*. And he was admired and cited by sociologists of the stature of Daniel Bell, Edward Shils, and David Riesman. Yet despite appearing well poised to become a major force in international sociology, analogous to his younger collaborator, Pierre Bourdieu, Aron has almost vanished from the sociological landscape. This article explains why, offering in the process some observations on the conditions—conceptual and motivational—of reputational longevity in sociological theory and showing how Aron failed to meet them. Special attention is devoted to a confusing equivocation in Aron's description of sociology and to the cultural basis of his ambivalence toward the discipline.

## Keywords

Aron, remembrance, stipulative oscillation, unmasking, the other sociology

## INTRODUCTION

Anglophone sociologists with at least a nodding acquaintance of Raymond Aron are likely to share two characteristics. They are close to or past retirement age, and they probably first encountered Aron—often for the last time—through his *Main Currents in Sociological Thought* (1965, 1967c), a two-volume text prominent on undergraduate reading lists of classical sociological theory in the late 1960s and 1970s. Reviewing volume 1 for the *American*

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*Journal of Sociology*, Lewis Feuer (1965) declared it “the most profound and the most interesting account of classical sociological theory that has been written” (p. 331). Today, *Main Currents* is assigned more rarely. One reason is greater choice: several surveys of the classics are now available. Furthermore, the impact of academic feminism and multiculturalism on the discipline diverts younger sociologists from Aron’s exclusive list of male and European greats: in order of exposition, Montesquieu, Comte, Marx, Tocqueville, Durkheim, Pareto, and Weber. In the 1960s and 1970s, things were different. Sociologists both fledgling and veteran who wished for a historical conspectus of sociology’s major figures had more limited options. If *Main Currents* never dominated the field, it was briefly among the more attractive alternative to its few rivals.

In his day, Aron was a prolific writer, a cofounder of *Archives européennes de sociologie*, and, fluent in English and German, a major presence on the conference and lecture circuit. As the cousin of Marcel Mauss, who in turn was the nephew of Emile Durkheim, Aron was a scion of a formidable sociological dynasty, albeit one that, in intellectual terms, he went on forcefully to oppose.<sup>1</sup> Between 1955 and 1967, he was professor of sociology at the Sorbonne and “one of the most powerful figures in the sociological establishment, a status which he shared with Gurvitch and Stoezel” (Robbins 2012:25), two other figures unread today. He introduced the *license* in sociology. He became, in 1960, a director of studies at the *Ecole pratique des hautes études*. He established the Centre de sociologie européenne, with Pierre Bourdieu as its general secretary (Aron [1983] 1990:239). And in 1970, he reached the scholarly pinnacle when elected to the chair of the sociology of modern civilization at the Collège de France. In early 1981, 448 intellectuals replied to the question posed by the French literary magazine *Lire*, “Who are the three French-speaking intellectuals living today, whose writings seem to you to have the profoundest influence on the development of ideas, literature, art, science, etc.?” Aron came in second (with 84 votes) and Foucault third (83). Lévi-Strauss topped the chart with 101.<sup>2</sup>

Beyond France, Aron was French sociology’s “most notable international figure” (Lemert 1986:691). From the mid-1960s, his stock skyrocketed among the cognoscenti. Ernest Gellner (1966), highlighting Aron’s “effortless mastery of ideas” and “a most remarkable sense of social reality,” called him “probably the most brilliant sociologist alive” (p. 255). Two years later, an anonymous reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement* (“The Categories of Capitalism” 1968) enthused similarly: the “unfailing clarity and brilliance of Professor Aron’s writing imparts to sociological thought an intellectual distinction and interest which have often seemed wanting” (p. 343). When Aron received the Goethe Prize in 1979, Ralf Dahrendorf compared his significance as a social scientist to that of Weber (Colquhoun 1986a:1). Confirming these encomia, John Hall (1981) pronounced Aron “the greatest ‘sociologist of the middle range’ of our time” (p. 195), adding soon after that his “achievement seems to me secure” (Hall 1984a:437); a decade later, Donald Levine (1995) honored him among the modern greats of “the humanist narrative” (p. 66). And by the time of his death in 1983, Aron was, according to Edward Shils (1997), “the most prominent and esteemed writer in the world on modern society and international relations” (pp. 56–57). With the possible exception of Keynes, Shils continued, no social scientist of the twentieth century “was so widely known and appreciated as Raymond Aron.”<sup>3</sup>

Given this background, the speed of Aron’s reputational eclipse is, on the face of it, astonishing. An International Sociological Association membership survey of “Books of the Century” conducted in 1998 includes no Aron title in the top 100. John Scott’s (2007) *Fifty Key Sociologists* omits the Frenchman entirely.<sup>4</sup> So do Craig Calhoun’s (2007) *Sociology in America*, Anthony Elliott’s (2009) *Routledge Companion to Social Theory* (2009), and Roger Blackhouse and Philippe Fontaine’s (2010) *The History of the Social Sciences Since 1945*, even though the latter contains separate chapters on sociology (by Jennifer Platt) and

political science (by Robert Adcock and Mark Bevir). Has Aron's legacy wilted because of insufficient translation? No. By my calculation,<sup>5</sup> about 280 items of his work are available in English, including 27 books and 5 anthologies collected by others. (Significantly, only 1 of the anthologies contains *sociology* in the title, whereas 3 invoke *history* and 3 *politics*—4 if one takes the words *liberty* and *power* to express essentially political themes.) To be sure, Aron is not entirely forgotten. Derek Robbins's (2012) *French Post-War Social Theory* begins with a chapter on Aron; a year previously, the *Journal of Classical Sociology* devoted a whole issue to him (Baehr 2011). Might this betoken a revival of interest? Perhaps, but for the moment, it looks like the tiniest ripple in a placid sea of indifference.

In this article, I explore the chasm separating the praise heaped on Aron, even today, and his actual sociological standing. I begin with some contextual remarks on the general conditions, conceptual and motivational, that facilitate sociological remembrance and show how Aron falls short of them. I proceed to examine a confusing oscillation in his thought that impedes its appropriation. Throughout, I hint that Aron was far more likely to be memorialized by the few than studied by the many, invoked more often than emulated. Symptomatic is the "earnest homage to the memory of that great Frenchman" paid by Jeffrey Alexander (1987:x) in the preface to *Twenty Lectures: Sociological Theory Since World War II*, who then proceeds to ignore him, whereas John Rex receives the substantive tribute of two lectures.<sup>6</sup> Just so, Steve Fuller (2009:137) extols Aron's "masterly" history of sociology before moving on rapidly, and in detail, to his nemesis, Bourdieu.

No attempt is made here to delineate or appraise the entirety of Aron's work, not even the entirety of his sociological work, a project befitting a book rather than an article. Moreover, I am concerned mostly with Aron's standing in Anglophone rather than French sociology. That focus is in part determined by simple expediency—what is manageable to encompass in one essay. But it is also informed by the sense that, even in France, Aron's is a minor *sociological* presence today. That the Aronian flame continues to burn is due, first, to the Institut Raymond Aron (founded by the historian François Furet in 1982) and its successor, since 1992, the Centre de recherches politiques Raymond Aron, whose associates include some of France's most important intellectuals: Pierre Manent, Mona Ozouf, Marcel Gauchet, the late Claude Lefort, and Aron's daughter, the sociologist Dominique Schnapper. But their efforts have not stopped Aron's sociological demise. He is peripheral, for example, to Philippe Masson's *Faire de la sociologie* (2008), a book concerned with the development of empirical research, on which Aron—unlike Bourdieu and Passeron, Boltanski, Crozier, Dubet, de Lauwe, Peneff, Pialoux, and Touraine—appears to have left little trace.<sup>7</sup> More ominously still, Aron is also tangential to synoptic theory texts such as Béraud and Coulmont's (2008) *Les courants contemporains de la sociologie*, in which he is mentioned only in passing (e.g., p. 47); it is the legacy of Boudon, Bourdieu, Foucault, and, secondarily, Norbert Elias that stands center stage in the authors' account. Another measure of Aron's indifferent status in French sociology (he is far better appreciated in French political liberal circles<sup>8</sup>) is evidenced by the inventory of books on his work compiled by Elisabeth Dutartre (2007) for the Bibliothèque nationale de France. Among them, I cannot find a single volume by a French writer on Aron considered chiefly as a sociologist.<sup>9</sup> All this suggests integral blockages to Aron's appropriation rather than simply local or national ones. I turn now to identify what these might be.

## THEORETICAL LEGACIES: CONDITIONS OF REMEMBRANCE

Sociological theorists are remembered in three salient ways: first, by the words and concepts they coin or by which they are recognized; second, by their programmatic statements; and third, by books or articles that are deemed so seminal to the discipline that one feels bound

to cite them as soon as one approaches the themes they discuss. When sociologists see “manifest and latent functions,” “circulation of elites,” “Verstehen,” “iron cage,” “organic solidarity,” “sociological imagination,” “social construction of reality,” “risk society,” “liquid modernity,” “governmentality,” “symbolic violence,” “interaction ritual chains,” and “fractal dynamics,” authors as well as ideas immediately come to mind; the words abbreviate concepts that in turn draw attention to specific writers. Conversely, the very mention of a major writer may conjure up a core concept, so that whoever says Robert Michels or Karl Mannheim says also the “iron law of oligarchy” or “free floating intellectuals.” In a similar way, when we see “sociology of knowledge,” “voluntaristic theory of action,” “ethnomethodology,” “conflict theory,” “structuration,” “figurational sociology,” the expressions, concepts, and key authors are again concatenated. The more general point is that scholars who are remembered in sociology typically bequeath large repertoires of terms of their own coinage. Consider only Anthony Giddens, who left us “duality of structure,” “double hermeneutic,” “space-time compression,” “pure relationship,” “ontological security,” and many more concepts besides. Will these concepts, nested like urns in a columbarium, be read by later generations? One cannot be sure. But without such markers, even the best sociologist finds it hard to engage, let alone animate, the sociological imagination. Productivity, intelligence, sensitivity are never enough, even prodigiously combined, to establish a writer longer term, and authors who fail to coin words and distinctions that fire the imagination, or who fail to become their exemplars, are doomed to the margins longer term. *De te fabula narratur*.

As for seminal texts, students of the sociology of power, for instance, can no more avoid Steven Lukes and appear knowledgeable about their topic than students of nationalism can skirt Ernest Gellner or students of citizenship evade T. H. Marshall. The importance of these writers’ books lies not in the acceptance of their theories but in the widely held conviction that they “set the stage” (Halsey 2004:62) for further argument. The more controversial they remain, the longer their influence lasts. Still, let us not underestimate the banality factor. Almost all sociologists, submitting their work to the journals, will have felt the pressure at some time in their careers to cite certain texts in the belief that referees expect those works to be cited; failure to do so may suggest naïveté or worse. As a rule of thumb, one can say that the less confident the contributor, the more such ritual citation will occur.

Now ask yourself the following questions: What sociological term, what sociological *idée-mère*, and what sociological approach do you associate with Raymond Aron? (And do you feel any need to cite him in anything that you write about?) Older readers of this article may invoke “industrial society” (too commonplace an idea to be specifically Aronian) and “opium of the intellectuals” (a coinage too uncongenial for left-leaning sociologists to bank). Younger readers are likely to draw a complete blank—well, almost. The book that many will have encountered at some juncture, even if they have never read it, is *Main Currents*. But most consider this, in essentials, a work of commentary and historical reconstruction. Now, canonical interpretation is, of course, an important activity in the work of many theoretical sociologists: think only of Talcott Parsons, Randall Collins, Jon Elster, and W. G. Runciman. But all these authors did something else that Aron conspicuously failed to do: they used exegesis—willfully, strategically, indefatigably—as a platform to develop their own distinctive sociological treatises. The writers just cited used the “classics” to fashion a host of *new* concepts, the bricks and mortar of theory.

Nor does Aron *repeat the repertoire*, the practice of constantly reproducing, over several books and articles, key terms as parts of a packaged whole. Repetition of terms, by a theorist and by his or her admirers, identifies the brand, helps commit it to memory, and performs a vital cognitive ritual: terminological incantation affirms and consolidates one’s membership in a scholarly community. While Aron returned perennially to certain themes—liberalism, regime, differentiation, the tensile historical relationship between “process” and “drama”



(Mahoney 1992)—he was neither by inclination nor by method a fabricator of terms. Most of those he used, always idiosyncratically, were just too general to be associated with him alone; examples beyond “industrial society” are “ideology,” “secular religion,” “space,” “game,” “regime,” “resource,” “power,” “violence,” and “totalitarianism.” Or if they are distinctive—“historical mutation,” “technical surprise”—they do not join a group of other integrated terms to give them cumulative force.

Another problem for Aron’s contemporary resonance is that the schools of thought with which he is associated appear passé, and were already under severe attack during his own lifetime: conservative elite theory (Bottomore [1964] 1966:112–28), the theory of industrial society (Giddens 1973:59–63, 76–78), and, not least, modernization theory (yet for a defense, see Alexander 1995:6–64). Ironically, the fact that Aron stood orthogonally to these schools—he was, for instance, a robust critic of most ideas of convergence—and was probably their most sophisticated interpreter did not help him either, for if the main current of an idea is in disrepute, few will care about its nuances.<sup>10</sup>

I mentioned that Aron, unlike sociologists such as Parsons and Collins, failed to deploy exegesis strategically: as a springboard to develop his own integrated suite of concepts. Yet it does appear that, at various times, he was poised to do just that. Already, in the introduction to the 1967 French enlarged, though single-volume, edition of *Main Currents—Les étapes de la pensée sociologique*—Aron (1967b) defended his choice of classical sociologists and gestured toward an engagement with their twentieth-century successors.<sup>11</sup> Should not, as some of his critics insisted, Saint-Simon and Proudhon and Spencer have been included in his survey? Not really, since Comte was a more rigorous and ambitious thinker than Saint-Simon; Proudhon was, at root, a socialist and a moralist rather than a sociologist; and Spencer, although a better case for inclusion, left no great legacy that entitles him to stand as of the “founders” of sociology (Aron 1967b:17–19). Moreover, each writer discussed in *Les étapes* represents a relationship of continuity with at least one of the others—for instance, Tocqueville builds on Montesquieu, Durkheim builds on Comte, and Weber and Pareto build on Marx; that lends credibility to the French title of his book, which might in English be rendered as *The Stages of Sociological Thought*. The logic, as Aron (1967b:598) admits, is to proceed to the next step: a systematic discussion of his contemporaries. He has, after all, examined the “first generation” (1830–1870) and the “second generation” (1890–1920). But instead of pressing on to rigorous intellectual engagement of the third generation in an expanded *Les étapes*, we get little more than a shopping list. Herbert Marcuse, C. Wright Mills, Theodor Adorno, and Lucien Goldmann are rapidly cited as living proof that the “critical-synthetic” tradition of sociology is still alive. Also briefly mentioned is the conflict between Parsonian formalism on one hand and empirical sociology on the other (Aron 1967b:13–14).

Why the sketchiness?<sup>12</sup> The conclusion to the original English edition suggests an answer: hesitation, prompted by ambivalence, fueled by repulsion, culminating in paralysis:

If at some future date I were to undertake a third volume of “major doctrines of historical sociology,” I should have to turn from Durkheim, Pareto, and Weber to the sociologists of today, and in particular the American sociologists. There would no longer be “major doctrines”—that is, all embracing syntheses involving at the same time a microscopic analysis of human behavior, an interpretation of the modern age, and an all-over vision of historical elements. The various elements combined in the doctrines of the generation of Comte, Marx, and Tocqueville, and still more or less unified in the doctrines of the next generation . . . are dissociated today. It would be necessary, therefore, to analyze the abstract theory of social behavior and discover the fundamental concepts utilized by the sociologists. Then we would turn to the

development of empirical research in the different sectors; this research is today subdivided into a great many fields, with no synthesis of findings. As for global historical interpretations of the modern age, Western empirical sociologists reject them, arguing that they exceed the present possibilities of science. . . . Is it truly a mark of scientific maturity that sociology presents itself in the form of a group of partial investigations and findings without hope of unification? (Aron 1967c:264)

Let us pass over the odd contention that modern sociology eschews the hope of “unification.” Surely that was the whole point of structural functionalism and, later, world-systems theory. The dramaturgy of Erving Goffman offers another ambitious attempt to bring unity to a massive field of social conduct. By the time Aron died, historical and comparative sociology was also entering a period of extraordinary effervescence. Still, the more relevant point here is Aron’s clear distaste for *his conception* of modern sociology and his plain reluctance to engage it. Since Aron was neither a champion of “abstract theory” nor a practitioner of empirical research, and since his style was more aphoristic than conceptual, more prone to oxymoron than to synthesis,<sup>13</sup> he had little incentive to take *Les étapes* to the next phase. That kept him true to who he was, the way he worked, and what he deemed important. But this dramatic art bore a cost for his legacy. By refusing to map out his work on to that of other sociological approaches, to harness theirs to his, or to create a bold new alternative, Aron was bound to remain a sociological outlier.

Aron ([1983] 1990:475) saw the problem. A man “on the periphery of all disciplines,” he conceded that while his work had the merit of avoiding sociological reductionism, his

mistake was to fail to develop the [sociological] analysis further and to fail to take a position in the debate over types of explanation and models of society [and] extreme forms of determinism and functionalism. In both the Sorbonne and the Collège de France, I should have addressed these questions of principle. (Aron [1983] 1990:241–42)<sup>14</sup>

Yet this self-portrait is not entirely accurate. Aron did address questions of principle in a two-part course delivered between 1970 and 1972 at the Collège de France titled “Critique de la pensée sociologique”; it hints at what a third volume of *Les étapes* might have looked like.<sup>15</sup> The course discussed, inter alia, the relationship between sociology and philosophy. It sought to develop a “critique” of sociology in both the Kantian and Marxian senses of that term; for instance, Aron argued that sociology’s scientism closed off vital normative questions about how we should live. He also claimed that Parsonian grand sociological theory was built on a false model: the grand abstractions of economics. Sociology required a very different approach. All this looks promising. But Aron never wrote up the course or, as he had with *Les étapes*, allowed the lectures to be transcribed for publication; he announced “Critique” to be an abject failure (Aron [1983] 2010:849).<sup>16</sup> Raymond Boudon, Aron’s protégé, offers an instructive contrast. While Boudon has never earned the extremes of praise that Aron garnered, his contributions to rational choice theory and analytical sociology have put him in the mainstream of sociological discussion, where he is likely to stay as long as those theories, and methodological individualism more generally, are argued about. Just so, Boudon made the leap into American sociology by engaging with such key figures as Merton and Lazarsfeld. Boudon’s full-throated engagement with sociology, and with its American articulation in particular, throws Aron’s equivocal rendezvous into stark relief.

Two additional features help explain Aron’s diminutive stature in modern sociology. The first is an evident lack of fit between his conception of sociology and its dominant versions. Aron was far more interested in political affairs—political theory, international relations (the cold war, nuclear deterrence), the history of warfare, the condition of France—than



sociology; even the most cursory perusal of his writings, including his journalism, shows that asymmetric investment. Moreover, he is emphatic that while political sociology, unlike philosophy, brackets the question of which political order is “best,” and seeks instead to illuminate the conditions of political diversity, its foremost job is to identify “the internal logic of . . . political institutions” (Aron [1965] 1969a:26–27). Political sociology is not a sociology of politics; it identifies the impact that politics has *on society*. Similarly, Aron’s focus on regimes (rather than “states,” “societies,” “social relations,” or “social structures”), and his analytical procedure of integrating the study of laws, constitutions, parties, and social environments under the rubric of “political sociology of regimes,” is alien to the way sociology is conventionally organized and practiced. As Alan Scott (2011:159) adroitly observes,

There is something pre-disciplinary in this approach, perhaps unsurprisingly so given that he is in conversation primarily with thinkers [Montesquieu, Tocqueville and Marx], up to and including Weber who were working before the emergence of the division of labor that marked the social sciences in the twentieth century. Aron, in this sense, is something of a throwback to the *Staatslehre*: to a conception of social science as variations on the theme of the workings and purposes of state, but where the distinction between state, society and economy is blurred. But his approach also has something post-disciplinary about it. As with the new institutionalists, or indeed much of the current debate around “governance,” the distinctions that have sustained a division of labor between sociology, political science and even anthropology begin to look redundant or anachronistic.

No wonder that Aron is hard for sociology to domesticate.

This brings me to a second observation. Authors such as Parsons, Merton, Giddens, Bourdieu, and Collins all assumed, early on in their careers, an emphatic identity as sociologists. Each of their books deepened and expanded a clear sociological problematic and highlighted a unique sociological signature. Aron’s sociology, by contrast, vibrates with equivocation.<sup>17</sup> We saw above that his qualms about the nature of modern sociology, and associated misgivings as to what was required to be a modern sociologist, deterred him from engaging with systematic “third generational” theory and, a fortiori, from constructing his own version of it. Even more profoundly, Aron’s self-concept and national location constantly pushed him away from sociology—even as he sought to advance its standing—to engage the two most prestigious forms of French postwar intellectual culture: philosophy and politics. It was Sartrean existentialism and Marxism that dominated the French humanistic landscape (Lichtheim 1964; Bourdieu [2004] 2007:5–7) and in relation to which all intellectuals worth their salt had to take up a position.<sup>18</sup> Aron subscribed to neither. Had he been a mediocre thinker, given his principles and commitments, that situation would have put him at a hopeless disadvantage. Because he was a thinker of formidable talent, it offered him a niche. Aron’s creative strategy was to remain idiosyncratic: the conservative liberal, the Frenchman who paid homage to Weber, “the intermediary between German and French social science” (Lepenies 1986/1987:169)—while combating his rivals through means that gained the respect accorded to enmity rather than, and far worse, attracting the pity assigned to irrelevance. If both existentialists and Marxists demanded engagement, so did he, except it was to be that of the responsible commentator, the “committed observer” (Aron [1981] 1983). If the likes of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty placed themselves on the ground of philosophy, then Aron the *normalien* would pursue them deep into the Cave. He had, after all, impeccable credentials: in the same year, 1928, that Sartre failed the *agrégation* in philosophy, his friend at the time, Aron, took first place. He further received a doctorate in the philosophy of history; his first books were on that topic; and his first explication of German

sociology was written from the standpoint of a philosopher (Aron [1936] 1964a; cf. Aron [1938] 1961). It is also striking that in his memoirs, Aron ([1983] 1990:56, 76, 79, 141, 238, 241, 407, 467, 475, 482–83) returns repeatedly to philosophy as if it were the benchmark of intellectual competence—including competence in sociology. In one particularly brutal encounter during Alain Touraine’s doctoral defense, Aron ([1983] 1990) criticized him “for indulging in analyses that were more philosophical than sociological, without having mastered the concepts, without philosophical training” (p. 238).

As for Marxism, it too was a source of continual Aronian engagement<sup>19</sup>—or a target of “permanent confrontation,” in Jean-Claude Casanova’s words (Aron 2002b:8). Against the *marxisant* epigones, Aron ([1955] 1985c) launched his greatest polemic, *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, following it up in numerous essays criticizing Sartre and Merleau-Ponty.<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, Marx himself is ubiquitous in Aron’s work, typically in paired essays that contrast him with Comte (on industrial society), Pareto (on classes and elites), Montesquieu, or Tocqueville (on class and political community). That interest in Marx and Marxism, and the peculiarly French conditions under which the latter flourished, explain why toward the very end of his teaching career (1976–1977), Aron was still delivering lectures at the Collège de France on the “Le Marxisme de Marx.” It further puts into context a statement that is otherwise baffling to the Anglophone reader.

To tell the truth my thought owes nothing<sup>21</sup> to that of Montesquieu or Tocqueville, which I have studied seriously only in the last few years, whereas for over thirty years I have incessantly read and reread the work of Marx. (Aron 1967c:vii; cf. Aron 1965:155; Mahoney 2003:416; Hall 1984b:73–74)

In sum, affected by temper and conviction, and drawn by style and the spoils of cultural prestige, Aron invested heavily in politics and philosophy. The cost was insufficient attention and commitment to sociology. To which one might add that the more professionalized sociology became in both America and France, prioritizing social science over social philosophy, the less conducive it was to Aron’s broad humanistic vision. Professionalized sociology expects much greater technical finesse, a more scientific approach to precision and testing, than Aron’s work affords. Pierre Bourdieu’s peculiar attraction to American sociologists lies doubtless in his ability to combine politically critical analysis with a “rigorous research agenda” (Swartz 1997:27) primed by state-of-the-art survey and interview methods. Fittingly, Bourdieu’s scientific credentials were recognized in France by his receiving in 1993 the National Center for Scientific Research’s Gold Medal, a rare distinction for a social scientist.<sup>22</sup>

## STIPULATIVE OSCILLATION, OR THE TWO SOCIOLOGIES OF RAYMOND ARON

So far I have said very little specifically about what Aron considered sociology to be; I have been surveying his general attitude to sociology and its national conditions. In this section, I seek to appraise Aron’s own conception of sociology.

Aron describes sociology by its *boundaries* with other social sciences, especially economics and politics (Aron 1967a:19–30); by its *aims* (notably to study the “social as such” with scientific objectivity; Aron [1953] 1964b:119); and by its *objects* (the small and quotidian “element” and the encompassing “entity”; Aron 1965:8–9; cf. 31, 63). Alongside these demarcations, Aron says that sociology is what sociologists themselves designate it to be, for instance, at the various congresses they attend. Surveying the field during the cold war,

he further identifies two “concepts” of sociology associated with two very different “schools”: American and Soviet/Marxist iterations (Aron 1965:2). The former is “fundamentally analytical and empirical,” while Marxist sociology is synthetic, historical, determinist, and progressivist. The problem with this largely self-referential rendering of sociology is that it is entirely untheoretical. It makes a concept hostage to whatever use is made of it, provided that the users are in the majority. Moreover, to regard sociology as what societies designate as such immediately calls into question his argument that Montesquieu and Tocqueville are sociologists. Neither of the schools Aron mentions, American and Soviet, would have concurred in that judgment—nor did the societies of which Montesquieu and Tocqueville were part! Indeed, it is precisely because the two Frenchmen are *not* conventionally recognized as sociologists that Aron must make the case in *Main Currents* that they are ones.<sup>23</sup>

Alongside this first clutch of discriminations are two others that are presuppositional, rather than conventionalist, in form. They derive, in other words, from Aron’s interpretation of relevant texts and his understanding of the societies in which sociologists live. The problem here is that the two versions he advances appear largely to contradict each other. Instead of a synthetic theoretical statement, we have *stipulative oscillation*: a confusing seesaw between two very different versions of sociology. The first is an unmasking version; the second is an account of sociology that rejects unmasking as execrable.<sup>24</sup>

In the first, debunking, version, Aron accentuates the disquieting implications of a discipline whose first casualties are a foundational idea of truth and a centered, unconditional sense of self. Sociology, Aron says, makes us aware of our own relativity; it erodes a sense of meaning because we know we could be entirely different people from the ones we are—unless we also believe (Aron did) that history is the story of “enrichment in the meeting and blending of societies” (Aron [1970] 1978a:70). Sociology “depoeticizes” society and disenchants it. As Aron remarked in “On the Historical Condition of the Sociologist” ([1970] 1978a), his inaugural lecture to the Collège de France,

To our customs and beliefs, the very ones we hold sacred, sociology ruthlessly attaches the adjective “arbitrary”. For our lived experiences, in their unique richness and indescribable depth, it substitutes indicators. It is concerned only with acts that repeat themselves, with manifest or latent classes; each act becomes one among many, anonymous and uninteresting if it remains alone in its peculiarities, marginal or atypical if it insists on combining features that are normally separate. In the wake of Nietzsche, sociology forces social actors to the light of day and uncovers their hypocrisy. As a millenarian vision, Marxism goes back to those mythologies by which men have wanted to assure themselves of winning in a just war. Insofar as it unmasks the false consciousness of all and the good conscience of the powerful, Marxism, like psychoanalysis, belongs more than ever to our time. In a way, all sociologists are akin to Marxists because of their inclination to settle everyone’s accounts but their own. (p. 76)

Or again:

In an age dominated by the ideas of liberty and equality, sociologists belong more than ever to the school of suspicion. They do not take at face value the language that social actors use about themselves. The boldest or most pessimistic, no longer possessing an image or a hope of the good society, consider their own with merciless severity. (Aron [1983] 1990:481)

To be sure, sociology lends itself to conservative and reformist articulations as well as radical ones. But Aron is especially struck, as many have been, by sociology's radical implications. Wherever sociology aspires to be a real science, discovering "facts, conditions, and causes," it cannot help but generate, respectively, an "unmasking" attitude (the location of hidden facts), cynicism (the reduction of values to the brute reality of tawdry competition), and prophesy (extrapolating causal conditions to future states). The cynicism that sociology unleashes, a close cousin to its unmasking properties, reached its apogee in Pareto, even more than in Marx. At least Marx's unmasking was selective, confined to the ruling classes and bourgeois society while conferring on the proletariat or "universal" class the grand historical task of human emancipation (Aron [1960] 1985d:200–201).<sup>25</sup> Sociology, as an orientation, appears even to lack any interest in the actual content of ideas, subordinating them to their function or absorbing them in a transhistorical type. Accordingly, the sociologist

does not hesitate—Weber no less than others—to lump in the same category such charismatic personalities as Christ, Buddha, Hitler, and Huey Long. If, toward the end of the Roman Empire, there had been sociologists, they would have carefully analyzed the diffusion of the new faith and the social categories that furnished proportionally the most catechumens and martyrs. Would they have taken seriously the content of the beliefs of the specific nature of religious experiences? Would they have understood the cultural revolution they were witnessing and whose consequences are still with us? (Aron [1970] 1978a:71)

Aron's sketch of sociology is one that many will recognize. It is the unmasking version that Karl Mannheim ([1929] 1936) examines at length in *Ideology and Utopia* and that Hannah Arendt (1963:13–110) attributed to social science tout court. It reminded her of the language of the Jacobin Committee of Public Safety and the Stalinist show trials. Yet Aron's depiction of sociology is in at least one respect distinctly odd. If unmasking, cynicism, and prophetism constitute sociology, then Aron cannot be a sociologist. He consistently opposed prophetic views of history and cynicism.<sup>26</sup> And the only thought-world he unmasks, with polemical irony, is Marxism as a "secular religion."<sup>27</sup>

Mostly, however, his analysis pushes in a very different direction. He found "unfair" the practice of demolishing opponents' viewpoints by "sociologizing them, or by psychoanalyzing them" ([1981] 1983:36).<sup>28</sup> This leaves us with a confusing conclusion. Sociology is an unmasking activity. (Sociology at its core or sociology as it is practiced?) Yet Aron is himself a sociologist, even though he rejects unmasking. At least one obvious solution suggests itself to what appears an otherwise glaring contradiction. It is that Aron is not pronouncing on sociology as such. He is criticizing a parody of sociology—*sociologism*, the essentialist reduction of the world to social causes. *Sociologism* is a bugbear that returns constantly in Aron's thought.<sup>29</sup> He distinguishes it from sociology in the following ways:

- Sociology is alive to the event, "namely, *an act performed by one man or several men at a different place and time* [which] can never be reduced to circumstances unless we eliminate in thought those who have acted and decree that anyone in their place would have acted the same way" (Aron [1960] 1978c:33; italics in the original). An event is "the conjunction of *one* mind in space and time."<sup>30</sup> This is a datum not simply of politics but of all human life, including economics; the Rockefeller fortune was not pre-ordained any more than Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is an inevitable outcome of philosophy. The event is a kind of "miracle" or act of creation (Aron [1960] 1978c). *Sociologism*, however, is not interested in events, because it believes it already knows their prime cause; once that is explained, the event's meaning is exhausted and its

independent efficacy denied. *Sociologism* is obsessed with the notion that behind the tendencies and oscillations of history lies some all-embracing iron law.

- Sociology “defined as the science of human action is both comprehensive and explicative. It is comprehensive in that it reveals the implicit logic or rationality of individual and collective behavior, and it is explicative in that it establishes regularities, or rather places partial forms of behavior within contexts that give them meaning” (Aron 1967c:264). Conversely, *sociologism* has all the subtlety of a sledgehammer. Qualitative disparities are flattened into differences of degree, while distinctive concepts are elided, often for rhetorical effect. Alluding to Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of “symbolic violence,” Aron remarked, “Whoever sees only a difference in degree between the ideology of the state in Moscow and ‘symbolic violence’ in Paris, blinded by ‘sociologism,’ finally obscures the fundamental questions of the century” (Aron [1983] 1990:482; cf. Aron [1976] 1985a:392–93).<sup>31</sup>
- Sociology examines the “social conditions of an intellectual development” (Aron 1967a:23); no one did this better than Tocqueville in volume 2 of *Democracy in America*.<sup>32</sup> *Sociologism* is the dogma that intellectual life is “*essentially* an expression of social reality” (Aron 1967a), as if other things were of no significant account. *Sociologism* harbors the conceit that it has been vouchsafed with “supreme authority” over all other interpretations (Aron [1983] 1990:241).

The distinction between sociology and sociologism allows us neatly to conclude, then, that the latter is a caricature of the former, and it is only the caricature that Aron rejects.

That is an attractive solution, but it is by no means entirely cogent. The reason is that Aron casts the unmasking net near and far. If Bourdieu is an unmasker, so is Marx; so is Pareto; so is Durkheim. Even Weber appears to be one in some modalities—for instance, in his theory of disenchantment (Aron [1970] 1978a:75). But if these thinkers, the “founders” of sociology, are unmaskers, can unmasking be a parody of sociology? It would appear to be its essence, as Aron suggests repeatedly. This is an ambiguity he never confronts head on, let alone resolves. Instead, and elsewhere in his writings, Aron offers a version of sociology—his own—that is the antipode of the unmasking, cynical, and prophetic type. I turn to it now.

## THE OTHER SOCIOLOGY

The other, nondebunking, sociology, the opposite pole of the stipulative oscillation I mentioned above, emerges most clearly in Aron’s lectures to students and in the sociologically inflected comments he makes in essays broadly located within the genre of the philosophy of history, his first love. The *locus classicus* of the former is the series “Major Doctrines of Historical Sociology” (“Les grandes doctrines de sociologie historique”), delivered in fits and starts at the Sorbonne between 1959 and 1962. Thanks to an initiative by Irving Kristol at Basic Books, the mimeographed lectures were translated into English in two volumes as *Main Currents in Sociological Thought* (Aron 1965, 1967c). In 1967, as noted earlier, they appeared in an expanded single volume in French published by Gallimard as *Les étapes de la pensée sociologique* (Aron 1967b). The titles of both the English and the French versions are somewhat unfortunate. A current of thought is not the same as a “doctrine,” a word that, as we shall see, Aron uses in a peculiar sense. And a stage or step (*étape*) of sociological thought implies that Aron’s approach was linear. It wasn’t. In his idiosyncratic account, Montesquieu and Tocqueville are greater sociologists than Durkheim. But then this is because, Aron appears to say, they were more sociological—or at least less sociologistic.



Aron often felt obliged to confront his peers in France, illuminating the dark side of their mental-set. Toughness was essential. He was engaged in intellectual battle with people who gave no quarter. His approach toward students was different. He challenged them, sought to encourage and guide them and to persuade them of sociology's powers, broadly considered, as an intellectual field. His tone is solicitous, welcoming if detached. His objective in *Main Currents* is to examine great writers rather than schools of thought, to delineate major doctrines rather than to trace sociological theories, a doctrine being "a complex body of judgments of fact and judgments of value, a social philosophy as well as a system of concepts or of general propositions" (Aron 1967c:v). Within this didactic context, sociology is a composite entity: entrained in history, implicated by politics, and underpinned by philosophy. This vision is richer and more ecumenical than the first unmasking version of sociology I outlined above.

What kind of activity is sociology? To answer this question, one is compelled to seek out and distil Aron's own scattered formulations. In doing this, I draw not only on *Main Currents* but also on other texts that speak to a similar sensibility.

In the first place, sociology attempts to render history intelligible, to locate within the "almost limitless diversity of morals, customs, ideas, laws, and institutions" a comprehensible order of affairs (Aron 1965:14). Proceeding from "meaningless fact" to "intelligible order" is, Aron says, the attitude "peculiar to the sociologist" from Montesquieu to Max Weber.

Rendering history intelligible, as Weber noted, "requires a comprehension of the actor's over-all conception of existence" (Aron 1967c:212), an understanding of the "meaning each man gives his own conduct" (p. 182), a disclosure of the action's rationality to the agent. Indeed, it is the job of sociologists "to render social or historical content more intelligible that it was in the experience of those who lived it" (p. 201). This is because intelligibility requires a related form of interpretation: the reconstruction of a "large sociohistorical canvas" that is not restricted to the actor's perspective but remains nonetheless close to the facts and the meanings actors accord them. Interpretation creates "an intelligible framework of which the actors themselves may not have been aware." The sociologist unpacks this situation and connects it to the actions it provokes, induces, encourages, or negates. To say that actors are rarely fully cognizant of all the factors that motivate their conduct is not to belittle or patronize them; it is to give action a more rounded context, one that is especially sensitive to the consequences of *previous* actions. For example, the American intervention in Korea in 1950 can be envisaged as "the logical result of the [postwar] sovereignty which the USA had acquired over the islands of the Japanese empire." Just as Japan, if it had been an independent player (rather than one vanquished by American forces), would not have tolerated a hostile power so close to its coast, so the United States took up a similar position once it was overlord of Japan's sphere of influence. Washington was temporarily Japan's capital. This is not the reason Truman and Acheson sent their young men to fight and die on the Korean peninsula. Doubtless they had other concerns on their mind, including the belief that communism was a threat to American principles and that aggression should never be rewarded. But an "interpretation" of the outbreak of the Korean War would be incomplete if it stayed only at the level of actors' specific reasons and discounted the situation in which those reasons unfolded (Aron [1974] 1988:40–41; cf. 63–64). A strong interpretation, for Aron as for Weber, is one that shows the compatibility of, and connection between, the logic of a situation and the actors' own decisions. In this way it departs insistently from any approach that devalues actions by claiming them to be epiphenomenal. Unmasking prioritizes the situation over the event. Interpretation yokes them together.



A sociological approach aims, second, to identify the “underlying causes which account for the apparent absurdity of things,” what Montesquieu called “general causes, whether moral or physical” (Aron 1965:14). At the same time, the sociological attitude, Aron (1965) observed, entails the capacity to connect “element” to “entity,” everyday life to national character (pp. 8–9, 31, 41, 204–205)—and to show the specific importance that one part of a social entity may have for the whole. Aron’s exemplar of this predilection is Max Weber, who conceived “the causal relations of sociology as *partial* and *probable*,” who “denied that one element”—economic, political, religious—can be regarded as “determining other aspects of reality without being influenced by them in return,” and who also denied “that the whole of future society can be determined by some characteristic of the preceding society” (Aron 1967c:200).<sup>33</sup> The small and the large, the quotidian and the earth shaking, are not polarized phenomena. They are inextricably connected; macro phenomena (the entity) are the outcome of a multiplicity of everyday actions and rituals, unscrolling across space and time.

A third aspect of sociological procedure is the distillation of multiple facts into a small number of fundamental types (charismatic, legal-rational, traditional domination; ancient, feudal, capitalist modes of production; organic and mechanical solidarity).<sup>34</sup> That approach, in turn, lends itself to a “comparative sociology” of which Tocqueville was an early master. Of special value for the sociologist was a mode of investigation that compared “types of societies belonging to the same species” (Aron 1965:184) because that affords a perspective on the range of options open to historical actors *in the present*. A comparative sociology of markedly different species may enable us to marvel at the anthropological diversity of life. A comparison of types among similar species allows the prospect of considering a range of extant options that are within the grasp of human possibility. Thus, as Tocqueville noted, democratic societies “may be liberal or despotic; democratic societies may and must assume different forms in the United States or in Europe, in Germany or in France” (Aron 1965).<sup>35</sup> It follows that sociology, unlike history and some branches of anthropology, is not defined by an interest in diversity as such. Sociologists are primarily interested in establishing the governing principles of the regimes they examine. Accordingly, the chief task of political sociology is to “understand the internal logic of political institutions. Political institutions are not an accidental juxtaposition of practices. Every political regime contains a minimum of unity and of meaning which the sociologist must uncover” (Aron [1965] 1969a:27).<sup>36</sup>

Next, a sociological approach is evident whenever a writer seeks to explore the interplay between political regime and type of society or extrapolitical forces. That does not require subsuming regime under society (from the classical standpoint, it is the regime that defines the community), still less the claim that politics has no autonomy (a view that Aron emphatically rejected). It does mean recognizing that political institutions in modern times, especially when they speak on behalf of, or mobilize, “the people,” are subject to social influence.

Was that not precisely Tocqueville’s argument when he distinguished between democracy as a type of government, and as an *état social*—a type or condition of society? Armed with that distinction, he explored the impact of growing social equality, the characteristic par excellence of democracy as an *état social*, on the state. Social equality denoted the decline in hereditary status and social orders, the erosion of deference; conversely, it typified the belief that all deserve similar rights in virtue of being human, the doctrine that it is the people who are the sources of rule and legitimacy, and the feeling that material well-being and comfort are more important than political virtue or military glory. Democracy as a social force conduced to or militated against political and civil liberty, depending on the

institutions of the nation that housed it. American religiosity, with its signature Puritan traits, encouraged passionate devotional commitment and political restraint; it combined “the spirit of religion and the spirit of liberty,” religious sectarianism with political openness, separation of church and state. France, on the other hand, experienced a war between church and democracy; its intellectuals were in the main hostile to religion; and political ideals, ostensibly secular, became sectarian to the point of fanaticism. Attention to the role played by “manners,” mores, and beliefs in the political life of a nation, and in the formation of its “spirit” or culture is, for Aron, a quintessentially sociological perspective. So, too, is the notion that social, geographical, and economic conditions favor some political institutions rather than others.<sup>37</sup> Above all, the sociological imagination appears wherever writers show how causes and conditions are constantly “regrouping” and being “reorganized,” a demonstration Aron attributed originally to Montesquieu (Aron 1965:43, 204–205; cf., on Weber, Aron 1967c:201).

Fifth, sociological reasoning is an activity that is compelled to confront, often from a discomfited position, its own normative standing. Montesquieu, for instance, grappled with a characteristic sociological conundrum when he argued that (1) slavery is both a natural, explicable mode of labor under some kinds of geographic-cum-social conditions (oppressive heat, where compulsion performed an economic role that is not required in temperate climes), while also insisting that (2) slavery is morally repellant (Aron 1965:48). Similarly, Tocqueville was “a sociologist who never ceased to judge while he described.” Much like Aristotle and Montesquieu, he accepted that a “description cannot be faithful unless it includes those judgments intrinsically related to the description, since in fact a regime is what it is by its own quality, and a tyranny can only be described as a tyranny” (p. 204).

Accordingly, Aron disagreed with Weber’s prohibition of value judgments in sociology “because neither historian nor sociologist could respect the prohibition without compromising the quality of his science” (Aron [1959] 1985b:354). The cruelty and inhumanity of National Socialism is as much a “fact” as the wars it prosecuted. It follows that a hard and fast distinction between fact and value is unworkable, and Weber himself often transgressed it. Yet Aron (1967a:27–30) upheld Weber’s fundamental distinction between science and politics. Scientific inquiry, to deserve the name, requires above all the “effort to understand,” a sublimation of one’s passions. The scientific attitude is marked by a sense of limitation of what can be known; the grander and more embracing the theory, the more likely it is a philosophy. The scholar’s sin is not the occasional lapse into *parti pris*. Far greater dangers are “seeing only what one wants to see,” being partial without recognizing it, and failing to recognize that “science can never say what a political decision should be, because each one involves a cost”—and determination of whether a cost is worth it requires a moral and political evaluation. Fortunately, science is inextricably linked to discussion and hence disagreement, which brings us back to Aron’s chief point that sociology is bound to grapple with political and ethical judgments in one shape or another.

We can conclude this section by noting Aron’s view of the attitude sociologists should adopt toward historical knowledge. Sociology was at its most sophisticated, Aron averred, when it was able to isolate historical tendencies without insisting that they issued, and were bound to issue, in one terminus. To that extent, both Comte and Marx were poor sociologists. Only writers who dismissed the independent weight of events—what Tocqueville called “the prodigious magnitude of the event” (Aron 1965:216; cf. 206, 212) and what Aron himself called “the event at a given juncture”<sup>38</sup>—could believe that human actions and choices were exhausted or absorbed by structural forces. Sociologists such as Montesquieu, Tocqueville, and Weber refused to “do away with history” in all the unpredictability that action brings to it (p. 231); they recognized that a “single event, a single military victory or

defeat, can determine the evolution of a whole culture in one direction or another.”<sup>39</sup> Had the Greeks lost the battle of Marathon to the Persians, and had this foreshadowed the destruction of the Greek city-states, it is likely that “rational culture” in the form the West knew it would not have survived (Aron 1967c:198–99).

Drawing on Weber’s habit of phrasing his conjectures and formulations in terms of probability or “chance” (p. 199), Aron summed up his own view of history and historical judgment by the phrase “probabilistic determinism” (Aron 1978b:50–51).<sup>40</sup> Because our knowledge is always imperfect, and our actions are refracted through the actions, inactions, and counteractions of other people, we can only have probable grounds for our expectations of the future, for anticipating the consequence of what we and others do. By the same token, history’s course is probable rather than certain, tendential rather than inevitable, because the initiatives we pursue are themselves implicated in broader social and political change. Polish workers were not compelled to form a free trade union called Solidarity. The cardinals of Rome were not forced to choose a Polish pope. But both of those actions shaped much of what followed, playing their role in the transformation of Central Eastern Europe. History is an “interweaving of necessity and free choice” (Aron 1978c:36), of process and drama, of necessity and accident (Aron [1961] 2002a). A person is free to the extent that he or she “could, without being essentially different, have made another choice” (Aron 1978c:35). But freedom itself occurs within situations—the organization of cities, type of regime, mode of production—which are typically not freely chosen, and it is the intersection of situation and choice that concerns the sociologist.

Finally, the recognition of what is probable, rather than what is simply desirable, encourages political responsibility, checking our sentiments against reality, and disinclining us toward doctrinaire thinking and utopian visions. Probabilistic determinism, Aron believed, was a hallmark of the sociological imagination; Weber, and especially Tocqueville, were its exemplars (Aron 1970a:19). Comte and Durkheim, to the contrary, were not in this sense great sociologists.

It is a pity that Aron never made this “other sociology” the subject of a book all of its own. That book would have made explicit the themes I have just elicited from his work; it would have fanned out to evaluate, and offer a substitute for, the unmasking tendency of German and French sociology and the rigidities of American systems theory; it would have furnished a specific set of concepts for sociologists to think with while remaining modest about their application. This is a fantasy not only because it never happened. Arguably, it could never have happened because it would have required a different man than Raymond Aron was. A different man, a different style of work, different priorities. Yet no person is ever completed. And we have seen that Aron did, episodically, seek to break into the ranks of major sociological theorists. A more systematic approach to sociological theory would have been one way to do so. That might not have made Aron a greater thinker. It might have made him worse: formulaic, dull, repetitive. But had it been carried off with skill and attention and stamina and nuance, his sociology would have stood a better chance of being recalled and used by us today.

## CONCLUSION

—“The question, however, is which of his own ideas and works will last” (Bell 1990:2).

Sociology is ideologically homogeneous—left leaning and progressive—to a notorious degree (Lamont 2010; Lipset 1994; Lipset and Ladd 1972). That being the case, some readers may be surprised that I have paid so little attention to the collision between Aron’s political stance and that of most sociologists as one likely cause of his marginality. We should

avoid caricature. No market libertarian, Aron defended a mixed economy and a robust welfare state. He believed vast differentials of wealth eroded political solidarity. He agreed that human betterment through technological progress was both possible and desirable. He had a strong commitment to human freedom. He was critical of all sides, including his own.<sup>41</sup> Yet Aron was also a friendly but honest interlocutor to Henry Kissinger, a participant in the anticommunist Congress for Cultural Freedom, a bruising critic of *marxisant* obscurantism and political irresponsibility, a writer for *Le Figaro* and *Encounter*. Do these associations offend the progressive mind-set of sociologists and so deter them from reading Aron?

Let us acknowledge the taint that clings to intellectuals who stand on the Wrong Side of History, Clio having mysteriously embraced the left since the time of the French Revolution. John Hall (2005) remembers “being attacked as a militarist for suggesting [when he was a doctoral student at the London School of Economics in the early seventies] that Carl von Clausewitz, Otto Hintze, and Raymond Aron were major theorists whom sociologists ignored at their peril” (p. 136). It was worse across the Channel: Aron’s doctoral student Jon Elster (1984) remarks that “being ‘on the right,’ Aron was an untouchable for most French academics. They might have wanted to benefit from his teaching, but they did not want to be seen to do so” (p. 6). But these are historical quarrels, not contemporary ones. They have little to do with the present generation of sociologists, especially those among it who are not French. Aron’s opinions and associations may not have helped him win lasting sociological allegiance. But nor has the confusing state of his arguments on which I have concentrated here. We have seen Aron’s ambivalence toward sociology, his conflicting accounts of it, and their scattered and opaque character.<sup>42</sup> I suggested that these features above all impede his remembrance. Would they still impede it if Aron were a man of the left? I believe they would.

If Aron made no fundamental conceptual contribution to sociology, why should we care about him? In the first place, because Aron’s peripheral standing tells us what contemporary sociologists do value and, for good or ill, what it takes to enter the pantheon. Rather than bemoan the “injustice” of his marginality, I have sought to explain it as a combination of Aron’s own predilection, the pull of the national culture to which he belonged, and the workings of sociological recollection: what “sticks” in our minds and what falls outside our purview and interest. Reputational success, the formation of the so-called canon, is a common topic of sociological discussion. Reputational collapse is still little explored (McLaughlin 1998; Turner 2007), yet the causes and trajectories of failure are worthy objects of analysis in their own right. Their elucidation has been my focus here, seeking, in the process, to reconcile sociological theory with the history of sociology.

There is another, more vibrant, reason to care about Aron’s work. Since the nineteenth century, the human sciences have been wedded to a problematic of “unmasking,” an attempt to show how illusion, domination, and hypocrisy fester under the skin of consciousness and convention. The unmasking style is the discursive sediment of the Enlightenment attack on religion, of Jacobinism, and of radical politics more generally. In our own day, writers as different as Bourdieu and Peter Berger advance unmasking agendas for sociology, while sociologists more generally use it, with malicious delight, to disabuse students of their naive beliefs. The political history of unmasking attests to its dangers: the trope was widely used in the revolutionary tribunals of the French Revolution and among the Bolsheviks to hunt down “enemies of the people.” Today, both 9-11 Truthers and anti-Obama Birthers use it, as do partisans of all political persuasions when referring to their opponents; such reckless redescription, which lowers all motives to their basest element and which never fails to find the worst in any opinion, is both a cause and an illustration of our polarized times.

Unmasking sociology raises worries of its own. It lies in our disconcerting habit of belittling those we study by demeaning their beliefs, by seeking to liberate them from illusion (as we view it), by reducing principled disagreement about the goods of life to phobia and false consciousness. In contrast with this autocratic epistemology is a perspective that aims to restore conscious action to a place of proper dignity in sociological analysis and to lessen the gap between third-person and first-person accounts. That perspective comports well with William James's ([1899] 2000) warning of the "blindness with which we are afflicted in regard to the feelings of creatures and people different from ourselves. . . . Hence the stupidity and injustice of our opinions, so far as they deal with the significance of alien lives" (p. 267). Writers as different as Max Weber and Hannah Arendt shared James's dislike of unmasking. So do contemporary sociologists, influenced by phenomenology, such as Jack Katz, Charles Turner, and John Levi Martin. Aron's "other sociology," as I called it in a previous section, is part of this counter tradition, a rich resource for all who wish to disclose rather than unmask, who aim to explain by understanding, and who, by so doing, devote scrupulous attention to the emotional matrix and nexus of meaning in which people try to make sense of the world they share with us.

I have raised a puzzle about Aron's reputational demise, but in concluding this essay, a sense of perspective is necessary. Most sociologists we read now with enthusiasm will be mere footnotes in thirty years' time. It is the classics that are the anomaly, not the rest of us who are forgotten. The reason for that is plain. Most sociologists harbor scientific ambitions, and the scientific part of the sociologist's mind assumes that what is newer is better than what is older: more refined, more accurate, closer to truth's horizon. The "progressive" cast that grips the sociologist is so compelling because it conveniently abridges both a belief in scientific advance and a felt duty to moral improvement; it also enshrines the unreflective assumption, as dubious as it common, that our forebears were less enlightened than we are. Equally, later generations of sociologists, concerned to develop their own research specificity, have no incentive to lionize those who came before unless it is for a flourish of legitimation. It is the historians of sociology, those whose job it is to retrieve the lost jewels of learning, who are most likely to be skeptical about progress in general. The historian of sociology, as distinct from the historical sociologist, inclines by temperament as much as by profession to buck what Gary Saul Morson (1995:235) calls *chronocentrism*: the tendency to take our own moment as the superior benchmark from which to appraise others'. We might have a very different view of ourselves if we reversed our conceit to judge earlier ages "in our own terms" and paused to imagine "how people of the past would have judged us in theirs" (p. 280).

Sociology's *chronocentrism*—its scientific and moral attachments to the new, its conflation of the traditional with the decrepit or defunct—does not stop Aron's sociologies from being employed piecemeal. Theorists of "the event" will find much that is pertinent in Aron's work and will have no difficulty articulating his contribution to those of contemporary authors on that topic (Abbott 1992; Sahlin 1991; Sewell 2005:197-270; Wagner-Pacifi 2010). Writers such as Scott (2011) and Du Gay (Du Gay and Scott 2010) are reviving Aron's concept of "regime" as an alternative to mainstream theories of the state. John Hall (2011) continues to mobilize Aron's insights as a theorist of war and global relations (cf. Hall 1981, 1984a, 1984b). The contemporary turn to Tocqueville as a major social theorist (Boudon [2005] 2006; Elster 2009) also has an evident pedigree in the work of Aron, a debt that Richard Swedberg (2009) has frankly acknowledged. More generally, a humanist sociology that draws on history, political theory, literature, and philosophy; a scholarly enterprise that engages with civilizational problems to ask big questions; a



working sensibility that mixes hope, caution, skepticism and political responsibility: all such impulses and perspectives will find wise counsel in that honored outsider, Raymond Aron.

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## NOTES

1. On his early collaboration with Mauss, see Fournier ([1994] 2006:297).
2. For an analysis of this poll, see Bourdieu ([1984] 1988:256–70). Bourdieu himself notched up 10 hits and tied for 36th with six other contenders. For his own conflicted relationship with Aron, see Bourdieu ([2004] 2007). For the winner's appreciation of Aron—"I was struck by the clarity of his thinking, the subtlety of his judgments"—see Lévi-Strauss ([1988] 1991:81).
3. David Riesman and Daniel Bell were two other Americans who greatly admired Aron. For Riesman (1985), Aron was the arch defender of freedom against all tyrannies. Bell's debt to Aron, evident in his most famous works, was made explicit in an interview given shortly before his death in January 2011 (Foa and Meaney 2011). Aron's "Social Class, Political Class, Ruling Class" (1967d) appeared in Bendix and Lipset's *Class, Status, and Power*, probably the most consulted reader on stratification of the time. Aron's "Two Definitions of Class" (1969d) appeared in Bêteille's rival volume.
4. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology* (Turner 2006) and *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology* (Ritzer 2007) contain short entries on Aron by Patrick Baert and Dusko Sekulik, respectively.
5. Based on an update of the bibliography in Colquhoun (1986a:517–19, 1986b:633–44). Colquhoun's compendious study of Aron is remarkable for its scrupulous attention to detail. I gladly record my debt to this indispensable labor of love.
6. Alexander does mention Aron in a footnote, contrasting his critical "liberal sociology" with Parsons's quiescent counterpart (p. 335).
7. Yet see Robbins (2011:311–13) and Baverez ([1993] 2006:422–35) on Aron's role in the Centre de sociologie européenne, to which Bourdieu and Passeron were attached initially as his research assistants.
8. And Anglo-American liberal or liberal conservative ones: see, notably, Anderson (1995), Anderson and Mahoney (1997), Davis (2009), Frost (1997, 2006), Jennings (2003, and the essays that follow in that journal issue), Judt (2007, 2011), and Mahoney (1992, 2011). Stanley Hoffmann has also written voluminously on Aron.
9. Not mentioned by Mme. Dutartre is Serge Paugam, directeur d'études à l'Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales, a French sociologist who has edited some of Aron's work (most importantly Aron 1972) and written about him.
10. An acute appreciation of Aron in this context is Goldthorpe (1971). See also Aron ([1965] 1969a), his most trenchant and comprehensive response to convergence theory.
11. The complicated publishing history of this text, originally a series of lectures delivered at the Sorbonne, intermittently between 1959 and 1962, is explained in Colquhoun (1986b:203–204).
12. Just as ephemeral are the comments that Aron ([1953] 1964b) wrote in a 1953 appendix to *German Sociology* ([1936] 1964a).
13. Examples are "imperial republic" (the United States), "enemy partners" (the cold war relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union), "secular clericals" (French intellectuals), "optimism based on catastrophe" (Marxism), the "prestige of misfortune" (the left's sacralization of the proletariat), and "*déterminisme aléatoire*" (the collusion of random and determined events in history).



14. Charles Lemert (1986:691), reviewing the French edition of Aron's memoirs, was "shocked by the scant attention [Aron] gives to sociology."
15. Aron's notes on the course have never been published, but he did summarize their contents in annual professorial reports to the Collège. I draw on the reconstruction in Colquhoun (1986b:373–78).
16. Aron ([1983] 1990), an abbreviated version of the original memoirs, omits this admission.
17. "I do not know whether I am a philosopher or a sociologist" (Aron [1961] 2002a:463).
18. "Sartre had genius," Lévi-Strauss ([1988] 1991:81) recalled, "a word I would not apply to Aron. . . . That said, [Sartre's] case proves to a striking degree that a superior intellect may talk nonsense if it wishes to predict the course of history and, still worse, play a role in it. The intellect can only do what Aron did, to try to understand after the fact. The virtues of people who make history are of a completely different type."
19. See in particular Aron (2002b), a collection of Aron's lectures spanning the years 1962 and 1963 and 1976 and 1977.
20. See Aron (1969b, 1970b); the latter contains a long rebuttal of Althusser's interpretation of Marx.
21. More simply, Montesquieu and Tocqueville powerfully resonated with Aron; they did not form him.
22. On the growing professionalization of sociology in France, and the current generation's sociological innovations, see the conspectus in Benamouzig and Borraz (2008).
23. Aron (1965:13) is emphatic that Montesquieu is not a precursor of sociology but a sociologist bona fide. Tocqueville is also "among the founders of sociology" (Aron 1965:183).
24. French, like English, distinguishes between *unveiling* (*dévoilement*; the verb is *dévoiler*) and *unmasking* (*démasquant*; the verb is *démasquer*). While the connotations overlap, the former has a wider and more neutral range of meanings than the latter. One unveils a statue; one does not unmask it. To unveil a party program is to reveal its provisions; to unmask a party program is to expose its provisions as bogus. In short, *unmasking* is a term of suspicion, as it has been since the French Revolution. It bears emphasis, then, that this is the term that Aron elects to use of sociology (e.g., Aron [1972] 2006:51 [from "Science et conscience de la société, 1960]; and Aron [1972] 2006:1087 [from "De la condition historique du sociologue," 1971]), the two essays quoted here in translation.
25. See Aron 1967c: 253: "Pareto is elaborating a scientific system which holds up to ridicule the illusions of humanitarians and the hopes of revolutionaries and in the end unmasks revolutionary and plutocrat alike."
26. On prophetism, see Aron (1965:231); on cynicism, see (Aron [1965] 1969a:27; cf. 23).
27. "Since Marxists are fond of unmasking mystifications, I want to return the favor and unmask the greatest mystification of the century, that of Marxism-Leninism" (Aron [1977] 1979:1). See also Aron ([1983] 1990:467) on his urge to "unmask mystifications."
28. He mentions Mannheim and Bourdieu as exemplars of this debunking mentality. For evidence that he deplored it, see his early critique of Mannheim (Aron [1936] 1964a:51–65). On Bourdieu, see below.
29. "In the development of sociology in France nothing has been more harmful as the tendency to confuse sociology and sociologism" (Aron 1967a:23). The allusion here is to Durkheim, not Bourdieu. On Aron's view of the latter as an unmasker, see the gloss of Alexander (1995:211, note 43).
30. "A human act becomes an event when it is seen as the result of a choice among several possibilities, as a response to a given situation. It becomes a work when it reveals itself as a creation whose end is inherent in the creation itself yet whose meaning is never limited to the one consciously or unconsciously given it by its creator" (Aron [1972] 1978b:48).
31. A very similar criticism of "symbolic violence" to that of Aron is given by Randall Collins (2008:24–25), who describes the notion as a "rhetorical pseudo-explanation" that "muddies the analytical task." Bourdieu's concept, Collins adds, is "smooth, tension-free, non-confrontational, highly repetitive, and without situational contingencies."
32. Aron (1965:220–31). See Tocqueville ([1835] 2003), pages 334 (for a sociology of judgment), 340 to 341 and 657 to 660 (for a sociology of emotions), and 505, 513 to 518, 521, 529, and 554 for a general sociology of knowledge.
33. "The aim [of the Weberian method] is always the same: to reveal the logic of human institutions, to understand the particularities of institutions without abandoning the use of concepts, to work out a flexible systematization that makes it possible to integrate the various phenomena within a conceptual

- framework without eliminating what constitutes the uniqueness of each regime or each society" (Aron 1967c:241).
34. "We make development intelligible when we reveal the underlying causes which have determined the general direction of events. We make diversity intelligible when we organize it within the compass of a small number of types or concepts" (Aron 1965:16).
  35. He added, on the same page, "I personally consider the essential task of sociology to be precisely this comparison of types within the same species."
  36. On the "internal logic" of regimes, see Aron ([195] 1969a:39, 40, 50, 52, 57). That logic exists because regimes are composed of institutions: modes of organization that harness, shape, and channel human passions in routine ways.
  37. See Aron on Montesquieu and his view of the manner in which physical and social causes shape political regimes, be they republics, monarchies, or despotisms. Among the social causes that interested Montesquieu, most were ones we would today call economic (the distribution of land, trade, and currency), demographic (population), and religious (Aron 1965:32–33).
  38. "A series of contingent circumstances or a decision made by one man, all of which might easily be imagined otherwise" (Aron 1965:217). "I am inclined to believe that the particular events [of politics] can rarely be explained except in terms of men and parties, their disagreements and their ideas" (p. 256).
  39. Aron (1967c:191–96, 198–99, 200) discusses Weber's understanding of "events" in volume 2 of *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*.
  40. On probability, see also Aron (1965:37, 206, 216–218, 231).
  41. "Anyone who has read Aron's *Essai sur les libertés* delivered originally as lectures at Berkeley in 1963 . . . can see how seriously he took the criticisms of American economic and social performance that came from Michael Harrington and Gabriel Kolko. . . . Aron believed that every government has dirty hands and comes off badly when its own ideals are contrasted to its actual performance" (Richter 1984:148–9).
  42. Davis (2009:59–60), seeking to "describe the essential elements of Aron's method for the social sciences," concedes unpromisingly that the "method" comes "primarily by way of illustration" and that we must "cull the elements of this method from a few short essays on Montesquieu and from the brief prefatory remarks introducing the Sorbonne Trilogy."

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# Thinking about Food and Sex: Deliberate Cognition in the Routine Practices of a Field

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## Abstract

Overemphasizing automatic, dispositional cognitive processes, research on social fields has tended to undertheorize the active, reflective dimensions of cognition that shape practice. This has occurred, at least in part, as a reaction to the overly instrumentalist premises of rational action theory. But redressing the errors of an excessively instrumentalist notion of action by overemphasizing the automatic nature of cognition leaves us with a similarly inadequate understanding of how cognition works to influence practice in a field and, as a consequence, the ways in which change may occur from pressures originating within the field itself. In this article, we draw from data on cognition and practice in two kinds of fields—a sexual and a culinary field—to demonstrate how inherent structural pressures encourage instances of deliberate nondispositional cognition and practice. These data suggest an expanded model of practice in field theory that moves beyond a dual-process model of cognition and toward a more nuanced understanding of the relationship of automaticity and deliberation, and habituality and nonhabituality, in the routine practices of a field.

## Keywords

social cognition, dual-process theory, field theory, theory of action, habitus, field change, sexual field, culinary field, pragmatism

Across the sciences, variations of field theory have been used to explain a broad range of phenomena (Martin 2003), from Newton's ([1730] 1952) work on gravity to Gilbert's ([1600] 1958) study of magnetism to Lewin's (1951) analysis of human psychology. In sociology, field theory has also had considerable impact, perhaps most notably in Bourdieu's (cf. 1977, [1979] 1984) work on practice and his analyses of cultural production and consumption. In the wake of Bourdieu's highly influential research program, sociologists have adopted field theory as a tool guiding empirical study and have come to regard fields as objects of great theoretical interest (e.g. DiMaggio 1987; Emirbayer and Johnson 2008;

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Ferguson 1998, 2004; Fligstein 2001; Lizardo 2004; Martin and George 2006). The diversity of such work aside, field approaches in the social sciences are united by the axiom that practices are accounted for by one's position vis-à-vis others in social space, less as a function of a force relation than the result of the overarching logic of the field itself (Emirbayer and Johnson 2008; Martin 2003). Here, unlike the actions of elements in the biosphere (e.g., the falling of a snowflake within the earth's gravitational field), human action within a social field requires cognition. That is, field practice is premised on the notion that actors somehow—implicitly, imperfectly—discern what criteria matter (i.e., the rules of the game), how these criteria are distributed across the field (i.e., the dispersion of capital between field positions), and where they stand in relation to other players within the stratification system (i.e., their relative field position).<sup>1</sup>

Prior sociological research on fields and field theory has focused heavily on the macro-level structure of fields and field formation, including the development of organizational and cultural fields (see DiMaggio 1991a, 1991b; DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Emirbayer and Johnson 2008; Ferguson 1998, 2004; Frickel and Gross 2005; Rao, Monin, and Durand 2003), but has, by and large, not focused on how actors cognize their social environment, make sense of it, and develop strategies of action (but see Green 2011; Leschziner 2007b). Instead, field theoretical work typically relies on Bourdieu's (cf. 1977, [1979] 1984) concept of habitus to do the micro-level work—a schema for action that represents the subconscious, somatic incorporation of social structure. To be sure, Bourdieu's formulation of the habitus has been an invaluable contribution, not least because it has pushed the discipline to transcend longstanding dualisms, in particular those of structure/agency and objectivism/subjectivism. However, we believe that reliance on the habitus has led to two principal shortcomings in field theory. First, in the absence of a sufficient analysis of deliberate cognition, field theory is plagued by a "thinking problem." Overemphasizing automatic, dispositional cognitive processes, field research has tended to undertheorize the subtle, fluid interplay between automatic and reflective forms of cognition that attend most social actions (Bourdieu 1993, [1992] 1996; DiMaggio and Powell 1983, 1991; Lizardo 2004; Vaisey 2009; Zucker 1977, 1987; but see Elder-Vass 2007).<sup>2</sup> We believe this theoretical inattention has occurred, in part, as a reaction to the overly instrumentalist premises of rational action theory (Gray 1987; Hechter 1994; Hechter and Kanazawa 1997; Wrong 1997). But redressing the errors of an excessively instrumentalist notion of action by overemphasizing the automatic nature of cognition leaves us with a similarly inadequate understanding of how actors cognize their social contexts to delineate paths of action and a myopic view of the forces that drive practice in a field.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, we suggest that insofar as fields are contested and changing structural configurations, they regularly militate against dispositional practice alone.<sup>4</sup> That is, because of their very nature, fields encourage deliberate as well as automatic cognition, which combine in nuanced and complex ways as actors apprehend and negotiate their positions in social space.

Second, we contend that an overreliance on the habitus brings the subsequent problem of explaining field change. While field theory provides useful tools for explaining social reproduction within a given social configuration, it is limited in the degree to which it can account for change (Fligstein and McAdam 2011, 2012b).<sup>5</sup> To the extent that field theory posits a one-to-one congruence between field and habitus, this is not surprising. In this formulation, change emerges from *outside* the field, in exogenous phenomena such as a global fiscal crisis or a political revolution (i.e., phenomena that fundamentally recalibrate existing relations) (see Ferguson 1998, 2004; Rao et al. 2003).<sup>6,7</sup> Yet these kinds of transformations, while great in magnitude, provide only a partial account of how fields change. Bound to the habitus like a ball to a chain, field theory has few tools to account for internally wrought and

incremental changes that are likely to characterize most field transformations, such as those that accrue from the active cognition and nonhabitual practices of field agents. Thus, we argue that the “thinking problem” in field theory not only limits insight into the micro-level, cognitive processes that shape individual practice, it also tends to obfuscate explanation of field change originating *from within* the field.

In this article, we draw from original ethnographic research of two very different kinds of fields—a sexual field and a field of high cuisine—to illustrate some of the regularly occurring pressures that encourage deliberate cognition and nonhabitual practice. The contrasting nature of these fields, namely, the distinct domains of life to which each refers (i.e., love and work), their differing degrees of formal institutional organization, and the variability in the stability of their respective field positions, make these two cases especially productive for thinking about cognitive processes in fields more generally. From these cases, we find that active, reflective forms of cognition and practice occur not only in times of major field transformation but as a *typical component* of routine practice. We highlight here these deliberate dimensions of action not to foster yet another dichotomous model for understanding action but because it is in the realm of reflective action that the recent field theoretic literature has been most inattentive. In turn, these cases provide key insights for redressing the “thinking problem” in field theory and, by extension, the problem of field change. They also highlight the principle that very little action is purely deliberate or automatic (Evans 2006) but, rather, depends upon hierarchies of automaticity and deliberateness (Elder-Vass 2007) that emerge within the context of any given practice in a field.<sup>8</sup> Thus, we engage with research into social cognition, and in particular “dual-process” models of cognition (Chaiken and Trope 1999; Haidt 2001, 2005; Wegner and Bargh 1998),<sup>9</sup> as well as with pragmatist theories of action (Dewey [1939] 1967, [1922] 2002; Joas 1996; Whitford 2002) to argue that deliberate cognition and nondispositional practice are not only *not* unusual in a field, they are in fact quite likely to occur alongside automatic cognition and dispositional practice as actors respond to the structural pressures inherent to the nature of fields and delineate paths of action.<sup>10</sup> It follows that the possibility of field transformation need not rest on exogenous factors alone but, rather, should be formulated as an ever present possibility within the routine practices that constitute the field itself.

Toward this end, in the sections that follow we outline the broad tenets of field theory, especially as developed by Bourdieu; review findings from research into social cognition that are particularly relevant to field theory; and sketch the terms of our analytic framework. In two subsequent empirical sections we draw on pragmatist insights to examine instances in sexual and culinary fields wherein actors engage in practices that involve a response to immediate pressures from the field, as well as the routine “muddling along” (Dewey [1939] 1967, [1922] 2002) in the day-to-day experience of being a player in the field. A discussion section brings the findings of our research to bear on field theory and underscores the need for a theory of action that provides for the proper place of reflective cognition and action. We conclude the article with a discussion of the implications of our argument.

## FIELD THEORY: FIELD, CAPITAL, HABITUS

That field theory would enjoy such widespread application in disciplines ranging from business administration to cultural studies is undoubtedly attributable to Bourdieu’s formulation of field, capital, and habitus—the conceptual foundation of his theory of routine practice (Brown and Szeman 2000; Calhoun, LiPuma, and Postone 1993). While not without critics (Alexander 1995; King 2000), Bourdieu’s framework has been used to analyze fields of cultural production (Bryson 1997; Ferguson 1998; Leschziner 2010; Pinheiro and Dowd

2009; Rocamora 2002; van Rees and Dorleijn 2001), education systems and their relationship to social stratification (Dumais 2002; Harker 1984; Nash 1990), consumption patterns (Holt 1998; Lizardo 2006; Warde, Martens, and Olsen 1999), the nature of professional arenas (Wacquant 2004; Widick 2003), and the social organization of sexuality (Green 2008a, 2008b; Hennen 2008; Martin and George 2006; Prieur 1998), to name only a few areas of investigation. Below, we provide a brief outline of the main concepts of Bourdieu's theoretical framework (but see Bourdieu 1977 for a comprehensive rendering).

A field is a socially structured space composed of situated agents, institutionalized practices, and an overarching logic or regulative principle (cf. Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Fields are relatively autonomous configurations insofar as the logic of action is internally constituted rather than externally compelled. Actors in a field acquire shared understandings of its stakes, pursuing strategies of action that preserve or transform their positions vis-à-vis one another. In turn, the boundaries of the field itself are never ossified but remain dynamic and subject to change (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Martin 2003).

Field players are positioned in social space relative to their power, or, in the Bourdieusian lexicon, capital. Capital confers legitimacy and prestige upon actors within a given field and may be used in the struggle to improve field position. As such, capital acquisition is itself a stake in the struggle (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). But to the extent that fields are distinguished by their own particular organizing logic and regulative principle, capital comes in different forms or, in Bourdieusian terms, species (see Bourdieu [1992] 1996). Hence, what serves as capital in one field may not in another. Economic capital, for instance, serves as a resource of primary importance in an economic or political field but may work against the agent in a field of artistic production, such as a poetry field (Craig 2007), where financial wherewithal and legitimate artistry are anathema to one another (Bourdieu [1992] 1996). Similarly, cultural capital may put a middle-class high school student at great advantage relative to working-class peers when applying to college, but it will confer little advantage in the boxing ring (Wacquant 2004).

Nevertheless, their relative autonomy aside, fields may be connected to one another by virtue of the interconvertibility of one species of capital to another. Hence, while economic capital is not reducible to cultural capital, the former is convertible to the latter insofar as money can buy seats at elite boarding schools, summers abroad learning foreign languages, or expensive after-school programs in music and art appreciation (Cookson and Persell 1985). Similarly, social capital is not reducible to economic capital, and yet the former is convertible to the latter, as when the graduate of an elite law school has at her disposal alumni at top corporate law firms offering both employment and large salaries with robust bonus structures.

But according to Bourdieu, field and capital alone are not enough to understand the forces that shape practice in the field. This is because, for Bourdieu, the logic of practice is reducible neither to individual, rational calculation, such as that proposed by rational actor models (Becker 1976; Coleman 1994; Hechter and Kanazawa 1997), nor to the internalization of values and norms, as suggested by traditional social learning models (cf. Parsons 1964). Rather, Bourdieu draws from a range of sources from classical sociology to developmental psychology (see Lizardo 2004), to complete the conceptual arsenal of his logic of practice with the concept of the *habitus*.

The *habitus* is a mental structure that represents the objectification of social structure at the level of the agent's subconscious (cf. Bourdieu 1977). It consists of durable and transposable dispositions and schemas (Bourdieu 1977). The *habitus* operates in at least two related ways: as a perceptual and classifying structure and as a structure that generates practical action. Because both capacities are organized by the social structural location in which an agent is socialized, the schematic and action-generative properties of the *habitus* closely

correspond to the external conditions of their emergence.<sup>11</sup> Put differently, actors pursue lines of action generated by subconscious, automatic cognitive processes (see D'Andrade 1995; Haidt 2001) based in previously constituted perceptual schemata and routinized lines of action.

It is important to underscore that the linkages among field, habitus, and practice in Bourdieu's theory emphasize social reproduction.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, in this account, only when a field is *already* in the process of transformation such that the previous homologous relationship between the habitus and the structure of the field is disrupted will actors encounter conditions conducive to thinking outside the schematic structure of the habitus, and here still only for a segment of field players (see Lizardo and Strand 2010). In sum, field theory has little place for deliberate, nonautomatic cognition in the course of routine practice and, as a consequence, little capacity to theorize change that originates from within the field itself. Instead, deliberate, reflective cognition is largely sequestered to conditions of fundamental field transformation, with the latter arising not from the changing practices of field agents but from the impact of exogenous factors and circumstances on the field. The extent to which actors rely on deliberate thinking along with more automatic forms of cognition and action, and the extent to which field change can arise from within the field itself, are ultimately empirical questions. But they are questions that cannot be addressed without a more thorough understanding of how cognition works in routine practice. To this end, we begin by outlining the notion of cognitive schemas as elaborated in the cognitive psychology literature and then briefly review dual-process models of cognition. As we will show, the notion of cognitive schemas and dual-process models of cognition build on one another and have important theoretical implications for unpacking the concept of the habitus and understanding cognition and practice in fields.

## COGNITIVE RESEARCH: IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORIZING COGNITION AND PRACTICE IN A FIELD

The notion of cognitive schemas has been increasingly used in the sociology of culture in recent years (DiMaggio 1997, 2002; Zerubavel 1997), but it has been used in two different ways. While many sociologists conceptualize schemas as classifications of phenomena—static representations that individuals have in their minds (see DiMaggio 1997)—others follow cognitive psychology to conceive of schemas as processing mental devices (Cerulo 2006, 2010; DiMaggio 1997, 2002; Lizardo and Strand 2010; Martin 2010; Vaisey 2009). In this view, schemas are active tools whereby individuals obtain information from the environment and organize it to create a complex model that allows them to delineate possibilities for future action (see D'Andrade 1992, 1995). D'Andrade (1992) defines schemas especially clearly:

To say that something is a “schema” is a shorthand way of saying that a distinct and strongly interconnected pattern of interpretive elements can be activated by minimal inputs. A schema is an interpretation which is frequent, well organized, memorable, which can be made from minimal cues, contains one or more prototypic instantiations, is resistant to change, etc. While it would be more accurate to speak always of *interpretations with such and such a degree of schematicity*, the convention of calling highly schematic interpretations “schemas” remains in effect in the cognitive literature. (p. 29)

Here, the particular schemas individuals rely upon are not the product of deliberate choice but are selected through a process that is largely automatic and subconscious.<sup>13</sup>

For our purposes, three aspects of cognition commensurate with this view are of particular relevance: (1) cognitive schemas are triggered by environmental inputs and influence one another; (2) cognitive schemas constitute flexible structures of thoughts and ideas rather than fixed rules for action; and finally, (3) motivations and emotions, not just external stimuli, thoughts and ideas, also shape cognition. It follows that a fair degree of individual variation in the workings of cognition should be expected (D'Andrade 1995:149).

While the idea that schemas operate not as fixed sets of rules but as flexible structures that recognize and respond to external stimuli (see Strauss and Quinn 1997) is reminiscent of the *habitus*, the two differ in important ways. One of the most important differences is that whereas the *habitus* is conceived of as a unified, comprehensive cognitive structure presumed to account for all cognition and action, the notion of schemas, as elaborated above, does not exhaust the range of processes that make cognition possible. Some mental operations follow what are called serial symbolic processes, through which inputs are turned into symbols in the brain. Importantly, whereas schemas are associated with automatic thinking, serial symbolic processes tend to occur with deliberate thought (see Lieberman 2007:261). Put differently, while many cognitive psychologists argue that the bulk of cognition occurs through automatic associations (see D'Andrade 1995:140–41), they note that there are also conscious modes of cognition and knowledge (see D'Andrade 1995:144–45). This is, in other words, a *dual* model of cognition.

The notion of a duality in cognitive processes has not gone unnoticed by sociologists (see Chaiken and Trope 1999; Haidt 2001, 2005; Wegner and Bargh 1998; for its use in sociology, see Vaisey 2008a, 2008b, 2009). Drawing from experimental research into cognition (see Bargh 1994; Bargh and Chartrand 1999; Greenwald and Banaji 1995; Zajonc 1980), dual-process models maintain that most cognition is automatic and based on quick judgments, that is, a feeling of what is right or wrong. This follows the premise that deliberate thinking is cognitively uneconomical, given that actors cannot possibly contemplate every single action they undertake in everyday life. In contrast to theories that assume that actors consciously consider goals and values before acting—a paradigm that can be traced back to the work of Parsons (1937)—dual-process models hold that individuals are only likely to switch to deliberate thinking when automatic cognition becomes ineffective, e.g., when they are faced with a new situation. In other words, so long as individuals are not especially motivated to use reasoning, they will follow their intuitions through automatic, quick and effortless cognitive processes to make decisions (see Haidt 2001). Here, individuals do not rely on reasoning to motivate action but, rather, use reasoning to create post hoc justifications of actions, or put in analogous terms, they rely on a vocabulary of motives (Mills 1940).<sup>14</sup>

That actors do not necessarily have conscious access to the thought processes through which they make decisions (unless especially motivated) but, rather, follow a sense of what is right or wrong in choosing a path of action is consistent with the sociological notion of *habitus*, whereby individuals select paths of action subconsciously, driven by incorporated and embodied schemas and dispositions. Indeed, recent work inspired by field theory (see Lizardo and Strand 2010; Vaisey 2009) draws on the consistency between this theory and dual-process models to further Bourdieu's emphasis on the automatic nature of action. But arguing that actors have an incorporated sense of how to act in given circumstances and that they rely on intuitions to select paths of action (i.e., what "feels right" on the basis of their quick judgments, as dual-process models contend, or on their sense of objectively feasible options given their social positions, according to Bourdieu's field theory) ought not to be taken to mean that actors *only* select paths of action through processes that are automatic and subconscious.<sup>15</sup> This would reduce our understanding of cognition to a single mode, thereby jettisoning the insights gained from dual-process models over previous unidimensional



**Table 1.** Individual-Level Cognition and Practice.

	Routine Field Practice		Nonroutine Field Practice	
	Habitual	Nonhabitual	Habitual	Nonhabitual
Deliberate cognition	Deliberate decision to follow previous practice	<b>Reflective action</b>	Old guard	Innovation
Automatic cognition	Bourdiesian dispositional action/habitus	Mistake	Rip Van Winkle effect	Mistake

theories of social learning (see Bandura 1977) or models of rational action (see Becker 1976; Coleman 1994). On the contrary, it is our contention that an actor's arrival at a given path of action, even when the actor is placed in a social environment with relatively stable conditions (normal field conditions of routine practice), can be expected, in some instances, to arise out of a complex combination of reflective and automatic cognitive processes.<sup>16,17</sup> While much of cognition may be automatic, we should be cautious not to underestimate the weight of deliberate thinking in everyday life. To advance this point, in the following section we offer a working typology of practices.

## PRACTICE AND COGNITION IN A FIELD: CLARIFYING THE TERMS OF ANALYSIS

Because practice may be conceived at both the level of the field and the level of the individual, we draw attention here to a set of critical conceptual distinctions that underpin our discussion. First, we distinguish practices at the level of the *field* as routine or nonroutine and practices at the level of the *individual* as habitual or nonhabitual.<sup>18</sup> Second, we distinguish cognitive processes, always at the level of the individual, as deliberate or nondeliberate. Combined, these variations produce eight possible types of practices (see Table 1). Since the focus of this article does not permit an exhaustive discussion of all eight forms of practice, we derive them here for analytic purposes and then use data to flesh out one particular set of relationships: the case of deliberate cognition and nonhabitual practice (at the level of the individual) in the context of routine practices (at the level of the field).

At the level of the field, practices may be characterized as either routine or nonroutine. Routine practices represent a repertoire of intelligible, effective forms of action and are to be expected under normal field conditions. In fields of cultural production, for instance, we observe routine practices when agents operate with a widely shared set of schemas regarding, say, how to render a proper portrait on a canvass or how to promote their own poetry. Practices may be characterized as nonroutine at the level of the field when they are not widely perceived as acceptable ways of conducting given actions, or even cognized as possible lines of action. In a political field, for instance, practices are nonroutine in times of revolution, when elite alliances break down, old institutional orders and ideologies are disrupted, and new strategies of political action abound and are in flux.

Practice at the level of the field has its analogue at the individual level, where it may take either habitual or nonhabitual forms. Habitual practices are those lines of action that are so familiar to an agent that they require little if any attention in the process of enactment. When an elite chef, for instance, prepares the same salmon poached in vegetable stock and wine night after night, year after year, she relies on a set of habitual culinary practices to the extent that preparing and plating the dish requires little thought. Here, the making of a poached salmon is akin to a professional cyclist riding a bike, the latter whose bodily movements, by virtue of repeated practice, have become automatic. By contrast, nonhabitual practices are



those lines of action that an actor conducts in an unusual way, either because she knowingly undertakes a line of action that departs from habitual practice, or does so unaware of it (by “mistake”). Hence, in the first instance, the elite chef may consciously choose to eliminate wine from the poaching liquid for the salmon, or in the second instance, she may inadvertently forget to add the wine (i.e., a mistake) but then decide that the salmon is better this way, thus innovating on her recipe.

At the individual level, cognition may be distilled into two forms: deliberate and nondeliberate. Deliberate cognition is that form of nonautomatic cognition whereby an agent draws upon consciously held ideas about a given practice, rather than on intuitions or subconscious dispositions. By contrast, nondeliberate cognition is automatic because actors draw upon existing, subconscious schemas, intuitions, and dispositions.<sup>19</sup> For instance, an upper-middle-class high school student may require very little forethought to choose to pursue university education when she reaches her senior year. While surely the process of selecting an appropriate university program will require deliberate thinking, the idea of applying for university education is likely to represent a dispositional line of action for which little contemplation is necessary. By contrast, when a poor inner-city high school student reaches his senior year, the decision to pursue university education may be anything but automatic. Financial obstacles and the absence of parental, sibling, and peer postsecondary educational attainment can all serve to make the decision difficult, fraught with uncertainty, and therefore a line of action requiring much deliberate thinking, if the idea is to be deliberated upon at all.

When considered in relationship to one another, routine/nonroutine practice at the level of the field, habitual/nonhabitual practice at the level of the individual, and deliberate/nondeliberate cognition at the level of the individual produce qualitatively distinct lines of action, enumerated below. Taken together, four possible combinations of individual-level cognition and practice in the context of *routinized* field practices arise.

### ***Routine Field Practices***

As illustrated in Table 1, working from the bottom left corner up, when an individual engages in a practice that is both nondeliberate and habitual (at the level of the individual), and which is part of the set of widely shared, institutionalized routine practices in the field, one has the classic Bourdieusian actor. When this same actor, however, makes a conscious decision to follow an existing practice (e.g., an elite chef who ponders removing wine from the poaching liquid but then decides not to), he has engaged in nonautomatic, deliberate cognition but followed habitual practice.

When an individual acts dispositionally, following habitual practice but, by accident, departs from the prior practice, one has a mistake. However, when an actor consciously decides on a strategy of action that is new to her, though one that is part of the widely shared repertoire of actions in the field, then one has a deliberate and nonhabitual practice (at the level of the individual) that is routine at the level of the field—that is, the topic of this article (in boldface type in Table 1). The elite chef who chooses not to add wine to the poaching liquid is an example of this type of practice.

### ***Nonroutine Field Practices***

When fields are in flux and there exist few if any institutionalized, routine practices, such as may be the case in times of revolution within a political field, or in the interstices between great art movements in a field of cultural production, or at the onset of HIV/AIDS within a sexual field, individuals may still engage in nondeliberate cognition and habitual practices.

Here, however, former practices that articulated with the structure of the field now fail to resonate with changing conditions, and one has a kind of Rip Van Winkle effect. Like Rip Van Winkle, who slept through the American Revolution but nevertheless continued to proclaim his loyalty to King George III, the Bourdieusian actor who acts dispositionally and habitually in times of field change is largely unaware of the conditions of transformation. However, when an actor is aware of field change but consciously decides to act habitually, one has the old guard that refuses to abandon long-held practices in the struggle to maintain tradition. Finally, as in times of institutionalized, routine field practice, in times of field change, when an individual relies on automatic cognition to produce a line of action but ends up conducting a line of action that is unintended, one has a mistake. By contrast, in this latter context, when an actor consciously follows a path of action that is novel to her, one has an attempt at innovation.

Having provided a conceptual enumeration of cognition and practice as these combine in the context of routine and nonroutine field practices, we turn below to two empirical investigations of how actors engage in deliberate cognition and nonhabitual practices by drawing from the routine practices of the field. In doing so, we argue that this kind of active, reflective cognition and practice is not unique to these cases but, quite the contrary, is to be expected alongside more automatic and dispositional forms of cognition and practice given the structural pressures common to all fields.

## THINKING ABOUT SEX: COGNITION AND PRACTICE IN THE SEXUAL FIELDS OF A GAY ENCLAVE

Anyone who has spent one night in a gay bathhouse knows that it is . . . one of the most ruthlessly ranked, hierarchized and competitive environments imaginable. Your looks, muscles, hair distribution, size of cock and shape of ass determined exactly how happy you were going to be during those few hours, and rejection, generally accompanied by two or three words at most, could be swift and brutal, with none of the civilizing hypocrisies with which we get rid of undesirables in the outside world. (Bersani 1987:206)

Sexual sociality in large, urban gay centers across North America and Western Europe puts in high relief the phenomenon of sexual stratification. As Bersani (1987) notes above, settings such as a gay bathhouse sort sexual actors into a vertical relation of positions by virtue of characteristics that include body type, physical attractiveness, and even the size of the genitals. While levels of sexual competition are not constant across settings, and indeed, the bathhouse in Bersani's account represents but one end of a continuum of fields of sexual sociality, the evaluation of others on the basis of physical and affective characteristics is part and parcel of life in a sexual field (Green 2011; Green forthcoming). But urban gay enclaves provide only one example of sexual stratification, the latter which cuts across social cleavages and appears in both homosexual and heterosexual social worlds (Farrer 2010; Laumann et al. 2004). The insight has been picked up by sociologists who have recently sought to make sense of sexual stratification through a Bourdieusian, field theoretic approach (Farrer 2010; Green 2008b, forthcoming; Martin and George 2006; Weinberg and Williams 2009). This literature conceptualizes collective sexual life as a composite of sexual fields, each organized by its own particular set of "interlocking institutions" (Martin and George 2006:124) and "hegemonic systems of judgment" (p. 126).

A sexual field is an arena of institutionalized relations in which actors vie for sexual partnership and social significance (Green 2008b; Martin and George 2006). Anchored to

physical and virtual sites such as bars, bathhouses, coffee shops, nightclubs, and Internet chat rooms, sexual fields materialize wherever sexual desirability operates as an institutionalized principle of stratification. In such settings, actors occupy a position in the status order via economic and symbolic capital, but perhaps most important, via sexual capital (Green 2008b; Martin and George 2006; Weinberg and Williams 2009). Derived from field-specific logics of attractiveness, sexual capital is a resource acquired through at least three dimensions of the self, namely, physical appearance, affect, and sociocultural style (Fitzgerald 1986; Green 2008b; Levine 1998). Those who possess sexual capital have greater command of the sexual field than those who lack it, including the ability to attract desired and desirable partners, an increased sense of social significance and sense of control and a greater capacity to take charge of and negotiate sexual interactions (Armstrong, Hamilton, and Sweeney 2006; Green 2008b; Murray and Adam 2001). And yet, because sexual social life accommodates a variety of logics of desirability, there exists not one sexual field but many in the North American urban gay enclave we concentrate on here—"the Village"<sup>20</sup>—each with its own particular norms of attractiveness and corresponding status orders. Thus, we refer to a spectrum of sexual fields in the Village wherein characteristics such as age, body type, and race are differentially valued. Here, in the context of routine practices at the level of the field, individual actors engage in cognition and practices that show a complex interplay of automaticity and deliberation, habituality and nonhabituality, respectively.

In our ethnographic work on gay and bisexual men in the Village, we find that the men who possess sexual capital have easier access to bars and nightclubs than those who do not, and are clearly favored in the course of interaction. As the individual below observes, the consequences of sexual status in a sexual field produce actors inclined to reflectively evaluate their own sexual capital and corresponding field position.

I have the sense that these kind of people that embody the ideal are more desired, so they are picking up more. . . . I have the sense that these guys are more sexually desirable and therefore more people speak to them. Versus me, I feel like I am kind of sidelined. . . . I think it's a sense to what degree that person embodies a sexual power, or a sexual vitality. . . . Going somewhere and being cruised. Going somewhere and having someone trying to pick you up. . . . People wanting your phone number, people wanting to be your friend. Strangers striking up conversations with you. . . . And they never seem to be the last left in the club. (Bradley, 32 years old, white)

Desirable men, however, are not randomly distributed in the population. Rather, characteristics such as race, ethnicity, and age shape the contours of sexual stratification within any given field, thereby tying sexual capital to broader regularities in the social structure (Green 2008b; Han 2008; Poon and Ho 2008). For instance, as the man below observes, race typically makes it easier for white men to find intimate partners than their Asian counterparts.

**Larry:** In the top of the [pecking] order, it would be younger guys and dress up quite fashionably. Usually white. Has to be very good looking and good body . . .

**Interviewer:** . . . How do you know this?

**Larry:** Mostly observation and, also, when I hang out with my friends and my one good friend is white and gay. So, when he tries to pick up, I can see how well he does in the bars, in clubs. I guess my friend, I can describe him as average, a bit better looking than average, but not too well looking, so sometimes he is quite successful in picking up. (Larry, 26 years old, Asian)

If those who possess sexual capital have the power to attract the attention and esteem of actors in a given sexual field, those without it encounter the problem of invisibility, social marginality, and even stigmatization over the course of interaction (Armstrong et al. 2006; Green 2008b; Han 2008; Nemoto et al. 2003). Hence, here, as in any field, capital is often part of the struggle itself. Accordingly, actors are motivated to cultivate sexual capital through a variety of techniques, ranging from the adoption of a fitness regime or a new diet to the use of Botox and breast implants. Indeed, while some characteristics that bear on sexual capital are largely immutable and not readily manipulated—including racial appearance, height, and bone structure—other characteristics, such as clothing style, the shape of the body, hair style, affect, dialect, and even eye color are amenable to manipulation. Analytically, the practice of attending to one's appearance is routine at the level of the field to the extent that the gay sexual fields of the Village anchor status so tightly to physical and affective attributes. Yet *how* one manipulates one's appearance (i.e., the specific things one does in preparation to "play" the field [Green 2011] may be distinguished at the individual level along hierarchies of automaticity and habituality, revealing paths of action that rest intermittently on automatic cognition and habitual practices, on one hand, and deliberate cognition and nonhabitual practices, on the other.

To be sure, not all actors of a sexual field share the same degree of investment in field status. Nevertheless, the fact of sexual stratification itself, be it in a gay bar, a coed "party scene," or a barn dance in the countryside, provides an important structural backdrop against which individual cognition and practice are configured. While some actors obtain a high standing within a sexual field with relatively little effort or awareness, becoming smooth, virtuosic "players" (or in contemporary parlance, what might be called a player with *game*), others struggle to obtain social significance, occupying only a marginal position within a field. In either case, both dispositional and deliberate cognition are in evidence as actors apprehend the fact of stratification in the social worlds they inhabit.

## AUTOMATIC COGNITION AND HABITUAL PRACTICE IN THE SEXUAL FIELDS OF AN URBAN GAY ENCLAVE

The Village is a hub of gay social life attracting a broad queer public, from city locals in search of a place to socialize with friends and to meet same-sex intimate partners to visitors who wish to experience a large urban gay scene. While there is a diversity of sexual social life within the Village, it is not unlimited. In fact, here, four core sexual fields organize gay male sexual social life and can be keyed, roughly, to the following sexual types: the leather man, the bear, the twink, and the jock.<sup>21</sup> Each field possesses its own sexual status order, including a favored sociodemographic profile and erotic theme. Variation in sexual capital shapes the extent to which a given individual will exercise command of a given sexual field. Those who are conversant with the dominant currency of sexual capital in a given field may come to embody it, acting in an automatic, habitual manner. Thus, the man below does not need to think about how to appeal to others—his appearance and affect are now on autopilot, requiring minimal if any active cognitive work. Accordingly, he seems unaware that while his sexual capital is acquired, in part, by dint of his youth and ethnicity (i.e., immutable characteristics), it is in fact not reducible to this. Rather, his choice in clothing and shoes, the gold rope chain he wears around his neck, the tan he maintains throughout the cold winter, and the baseball cap worn backward on his head have all become automatic and habitual, rendering him a "delicacy" in the Village.<sup>22</sup>

- Tony:** I've met people just walking down the street. Like I'm standing on the corner and they're standing across from me and it's been like, "Alright, just come back to my place." Like it's just that easy—same thing on the subway . . .
- Interviewer:** So what do you attribute to this? Like, do you do anything to your appearance to be attractive to other men?
- Tony:** I would say Italian is a big delicacy in the gay world . . . I'm always getting groped . . . (Tony, 25 years old, white)

Becoming a "delicacy" in the sexual field is, typically, a process that occurs over time. In this case, positive, affirming interactions in collective sexual life establish the conditions under which an actor may become a virtuosic player (i.e., a natural "match" with the field) including an intuitive sense of the reigning logic of desirability, an embodiment of those modes of self-presentation and affect that confer sexual capital in the field, and a habitual ease of purpose that makes an actor all the more desirable to others.

In contrast, were an overweight Italian man, or a visibly effeminate Italian man, or an Italian man who does not broadcast an athletic disposition, to socialize in the same sexual field as Tony, he would likely experience a sexual capital *deficit*, unable to articulate with the field's logic of desirability. Similarly, when a twink begins to age out of his mid-20s or develops a bald spot, or when a jock loses his musculature or develops a double chin, both field players are likely to hold themselves up as objects of reflective consideration, not the least because reception from other agents in the field will change. That is, slowly but surely, others will be less likely to initiate conversation, or buy them drinks, or receive their approaches amicably. In these conditions, actors may respond to their changing status in highly deliberate ways as they develop new strategies of action, such as developing a new front (Goffman 1959) or finding a more accommodating sexual field in which to socialize. Alternatively, they may "muddle about" (Dewey [1939] 1967), uncertain how to change their social fate until a particularly negative experience of rejection prompts a decisive response. These are the occasions of deliberate cognition and nonhabitual practice at the individual level, a phenomenon we discuss below.

## DELIBERATE, NONHABITUAL, ROUTINE PRACTICE IN THE SEXUAL FIELDS OF AN URBAN GAY ENCLAVE

Across sexual fields, it is common for actors to observe that aging erodes sexual capital, particularly in the context of the twink sexual field and, to a lesser extent, the jock sexual field. As a consequence, the once virtuosic twink will at some point find himself aging out of high status. In these instances, actors are obliged to take stock of both their sexual interests and their physical and affective characteristics in a reflective process of repositioning themselves in collective sexual life.

When I was younger, I was a classic twink in university. . . . So you can do it here [as a young man in college]. . . . Maybe when I get older, certainly the leather element and the ethnic [white] of it are probably what I [am] closest to now. I am not a twink; I am getting older, sadly. But maybe when I am older I might move toward the bear stereotype, who knows. (Dan, 29 years old, white)

If some actors become resigned to a diminished field position, others develop lines of action to buffer what they perceive to be eroding sexual capital. For instance, the respondent below is concerned to compensate for recent loss in muscular definition, including special



“pump-ups” and a carefully selected t-shirt. Put differently, while attentiveness to appearance is routine at the level of the field, preparation for a night out shows instances of both automatic and deliberate cognition, along with both habitual and reflective practices, particularly as this actor works to mitigate his potential diminished appeal and sustain his field position.

I always trim my chest and armpits, so they're trimmed. . . . And this is going to sound so stupid, but sometimes I'll do, like, push-ups and stuff, to try to, like maybe it will give me a little bit more shape or something, because I've lost a lot of that shape that I used to have. . . . So this weekend I wore a muscle shirt that's quite—because I'm pretty thin—so I wear a muscle shirt that's quite taut to my body. And I did that purposefully, because I thought that might attract somebody, as opposed to wearing something like this, for example, like the baggy shirt. (Alex, 37 years old, white)

For Alex, trimming his body hair is a habitual practice commensurate with the field-level routine practice of careful attention to appearance. However, on this particular weekend, Alex scrutinized his wardrobe in an act of deliberate cognition, producing a line of action that is both habitual at the level of field practice (i.e., using wardrobe to maximize attractiveness) and nonhabitual insofar as his recent weight loss called for renewed attention to offset his diminishing muscularity with an especially tight shirt. In this instance we see a complex layering of forms of cognition and practice that render action irreducible to dichotomous terms.

Where Alex becomes particularly reflective about his appearance on account of a recent loss of muscle, some actors are so reflective about their self-presentation that they differentially manipulate their fronts in order to maximize their sexual capital *between* sexual partners and sexual fields. In the case below, Dennis observes the structure of desire of the fields within which he participates and then, like a chameleon, presents a corresponding front that articulates with it. While cultivating sexual capital to obtain desirable partners was the original impetus for this actor's front work (Goffman 1959), it appears that the ability to appeal to many different actors across different fields is now the principle objective and self-preparation is configured in a highly deliberate process of cognition that combines nonhabitual elements of practice with the habit of manipulating the appearance:

Depends on what I wanna be. . . . You see, 'cause I always look different. And people like different looks of me. I'll trim all my hair off, just on my face to get that other crowd—that other look. Other times I'll just go with the mustache or a beard or I'll leave the gray in. Because I have a whole different crowd of men who like me in different things. It's also, if I see someone and I'm chasing them, [I'll] figure out what they like and then I'll sometimes go with that look and see what happens. (Dennis, 37 years old, Aboriginal)

But if manipulation of the front is rather easy for some, for others, it is a rather unnatural, time-consuming, alienated process. For instance, for the respondent below, obtaining a masculine-looking exterior is now part of an automatic cognitive process that involves habitual practices related to a careful gym regimen and wearing clothes that “conform” to the standards of the field. At the same time, these automatic and habitual practices are nestled within the larger project of “being masculine” and properly “embodying” his corporeal creation—a project that is anything but easy or intuitive, underscoring the deliberate cognitive work attendant to the presentation of self (Goffman 1959) in a sexual field. Put differently, here we see a highly reflective effort to cultivate not just the façade of masculinity, but

what in Bourdieusian terms we might think of as “hexis” (Bourdieu 1998). Only then, he reasons, will he become “sexually viable”

I do a lot of things to give myself the signs of conformity, such as trying to wear clothes to some degree that resonates with the scene. And to a large part actually, alter my body, my physical being . . . to conform with the standards, to make myself more sexually viable . . . I mean, I [have] become very interested in fitness, in altering my body to conform to the ideal of masculinity . . . I mean masculinity is a big thing. It's almost been a struggle to embody masculinity. . . . It means going to the gym, working out. I'm trying to get bigger, trying to get more masculine. . . . Because all along I felt so disembodied. (Bradley, 32 years old, white)

In short, sexual stratification produces endogenous structural pressures that lead actors to think both deliberately and automatically, and to act both habitually and nonhabitually. Such individual-level forms of cognition and practice arise in the context of the routine practices of a sexual field. Below, we turn to an arena of high cuisine to illustrate further the significance of internally constituted structural pressures in a very different context.

## THINKING ABOUT FOOD: COGNITION AND PRACTICE IN A CULINARY FIELD

A field of high cuisine is a social space constituted by elite chefs who orient their actions toward one another as they compete for customers and struggle for status within a bounded geographic location.<sup>23</sup> To the extent that high-end restaurants within a given locale share a limited customer base, elite chefs often look to what other chefs in the same city are doing to ensure that they remain competitive (Leschziner 2007a; see also Rao, Monin, and Durand 2003, 2005). Unlike fields in which actors orient their actions toward individuals who may be geographically distant (e.g., in academia) chefs orient their actions toward their local peers.<sup>24</sup> But they do not compete with any local peer. Chefs at elite restaurants do not need to know what others at diners, fast food establishments, or “ethnic” restaurants do, as they do not orient their decisions around the actions of these individuals (see Leschziner 2007b, 2010; see also Rao et al. 2005).<sup>25</sup> Thus, we take chefs working at elite restaurants in New York City and San Francisco, the case studies upon which we draw here, to constitute two culinary fields.<sup>26</sup>

A culinary field is organized around the production of goods (dishes) with symbolic value and work that is invariably commercial, financially costly, and risky. That is, whereas chefs must serve food with creative appeal to obtain symbolic capital, they can only “play the game” and remain in the field if they also ensure that their restaurants are profitable (Leschziner 2010; Rao et al. 2005).

It takes many years of hard work to become an executive chef at an elite restaurant, especially in cities such as New York and San Francisco. Once obtaining this prestigious position, chefs have considerable investment in “the game” as well as in the specific social positions they occupy in the field. To maintain (or improve) such positions, they have to find a balance between conformity with the work of their peers and originality to stand out in the market (see Peterson 1997; Phillips and Zuckerman 2001). For these purposes, elite chefs monitor the field closely, seeking information from their environment to make choices about a whole range of factors, namely, the food, cost, decor, service, and wine program (Leschziner 2007a, 2010). If there is an economic recession and peers at similar restaurants respond by lowering prices or offering special deals, elite chefs are likely to emulate these practices in

their own restaurants (cf. DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Beyond keeping up with peers, they seek to gain a competitive edge on the market, reading food publications, surfing the Web, and traveling for the sole purpose of dining and obtaining ideas that will distinguish them from other chefs in their field (Leschziner 2007a).

To be sure, not all chefs face the same pressures. Where those at four-star restaurants (the highest number awarded by the *New York Times* and *San Francisco Chronicle*, obtained by only a handful of establishments) face the greatest pressures to demonstrate consistent excellence, chefs at two-star restaurants face the greatest pressures to differentiate themselves from others, as they must distinguish themselves from chefs at numerous comparable restaurants, as well as from those below and above them. By the same token, a chef who has worked at a well-established restaurant need not monitor peers as closely as a chef who recently opened a restaurant. Similarly, someone who has held a chef's position in New York for a long time, having more accumulated knowledge and confidence in his own skills, experiences less pressure to monitor others closely than more junior counterparts.

Because chefs face different types and degrees of pressures, some are especially encouraged to be deliberate in their work, whereas others act more automatically without putting in jeopardy their positions. Whether chefs will be more or less deliberate is to a large extent determined by the pressures they face given the positions they occupy in the culinary field, positions they attain through their culinary styles, the status of the restaurants where they work, and their social connections (Leschziner 2010, 2011). Nevertheless, even in structurally secure positions (e.g., a well-established restaurant serving traditional food), some chefs will go out of their way to make regular changes to their menus. These chefs are more likely to think deliberately and act nonhabitually than those who, in similarly secure positions, are more complacent at their job and do the minimum required to keep customers satisfied and their restaurants afloat.

## AUTOMATIC COGNITION AND HABITUAL PRACTICE IN A CULINARY FIELD

Like any culinary field, the New York City and San Francisco fields are constituted by chefs who have different levels of status and culinary styles and who work in restaurants with budgets, facilities, and staffs that vary significantly. Yet culinary fields have certain inherent structural pressures that affect all actors, including the need to make products that are creative yet also familiar, and the tension between the artistry of culinary creation and its commercial nature (Leschziner 2007a; Peterson 1997; Phillips and Zuckerman 2001). Given the characteristics of culinary fields and the kinds of tasks that constitute chefs' jobs—ranging from mechanical actions in cooking to the creation of new dishes and strategic decisions to manage the business—cognition and practice take varying forms across different parts of the job as well as in the changing circumstances in chefs' careers.

Regardless of their particular circumstances, all chefs perform tasks in the kitchen that are largely reliant on a repertoire of automatic actions. Arguably, the latter are all but required to cook multiple dishes to order during the rush of lunch or dinner service, when there is simply no time to think. Indeed, cooking tends to become so automatic that some chefs remark that they turn into robots in the kitchen. Yes this is not entirely due to the demands of lunch or dinner service. Rather, it is because chefs are wont to perform the same tasks over and over again in the kitchen, and years of repeated practice turn these tasks into dispositions.<sup>27</sup>

Whereas most chefs develop a repertoire of actions in food preparation that became second nature, they vary in how they cognitively approach food. When conceiving dishes, chefs

draw on a host of widely shared ideas about the ingredients that pair well together (and those that do not) and the techniques that are best used with given foodstuffs. Yet some of them create dishes with little awareness that they rely on shared ideas. The variance in chefs' cognitive approach to food is associated, as we suggested above, with their field positions. A well-established chef at a high-end restaurant who has cooked in the same traditional culinary style for years, such as the individual below, is more likely to conceptualize cooking in a relatively automatic way than a young chef trying to find his way in the field and seeking to innovate on traditional styles.<sup>28</sup>

How I came to this [pairing lamb with couscous], how I came to this. That's very classical but it's a little bit different. You get roast, roast, and braised. How I came to do this, because I really love lamb, and lamb goes well with couscous. It's a *fact*. I didn't invent anything. (Chef at a high-status restaurant in New York City)<sup>29</sup>

It is precisely because the pairing of lamb and couscous is ostensibly so well known (both are common in North African countries and typically served together) that the chef is no longer able to explain why it is a good combination; that is, it has an appeal that can be experienced as intuitive and can be evaluated through a quick, hot judgment (see Haidt 2001). This is not to be taken to mean that learning and appreciating well-established ideas are, by definition, automatic processes, but rather that after being learned and relied upon routinely, these ideas can be applied without requiring deliberate cognition. By contrast, pairing lamb with salmon roe, an unusual combination, would have to be deliberately considered *and* tested to assess whether it makes a good dish. In both instances, chefs would rely on a combination of automatic and deliberative cognition, but whereas automaticity would be especially salient in the former instance, deliberative thinking would predominate in the latter. Beyond having incorporated certain categories for thinking about food to the degree that they become dispositional, the interviewee cited above, like many other chefs, takes a stand against a conscious, deliberate reliance on such categories to conceive of food, a viewpoint he explains as follows:

When you are eating, you are eating to *nourish yourself, to enjoy yourself*. Don't get "How much of this, too much salt here." *That is bull. That is bull.* . . . You think that my grandmother was worried about "It's crunchy, it's sour, and it's sweet"? You think she was worried about this? She didn't know. And she tasted, and she liked it and she saw the family liking it and she said "That's it. It's agreement." That's all. The fact that guys go "It's sweet, sour, it's crunchy." You know, I really don't want to be too accusing on this one, but there's a lot of those American chefs who . . . You know, if you listen to Emeril Lagasse when he cooks, does he say "sweet," "sour"? No, he doesn't. He says "Hey, that's good, you know." That's what he says. And that's the intellect, really, that's the intellect really ruin it. (Chef at a high-status restaurant in New York City)

Ironically, this chef's stance against a deliberative approach to food is deliberative itself. As a high-status chef with a long career cooking food in a relatively similar style without seeking to create novel ingredient combinations or use innovative cooking techniques, he *can* rely on well-established categories subconsciously and experience his approach to cooking as second nature. While this particular approach to cooking was originally a desire, and a choice, it has become habitual. The processes whereby he conceives of food and designs dishes are generally neither intellectual nor the result of an extensive cognitive evaluation

but, quite the contrary, a function of a gut-level sensation about whether the combination of ingredients tastes good or not. Indeed, here is the instantaneous, automatic, hot cognition of a disposition, formerly constituted as a culinary convention but now internalized as a deep intuition.

## DELIBERATE, NONHABITUAL, ROUTINE PRACTICE IN A CULINARY FIELD

In contrast to actors with long-term, established positions in the field, those in the early stages of their careers encounter conditions that encourage deliberate approaches to cooking. On one hand, chefs with less experience are less likely to have internalized culinary conventions and actions in the kitchen to the point of experiencing them as intuitions. On the other hand, they have more incentives to think deliberately and act nonhabitually in the process of developing distinctive culinary styles that stand out in a competitive market and establish their name in the field. In short, such chefs are likely to approach cooking through processes that combine a degree of automaticity with a higher reliance on deliberate cognition in a context that, while routine at the level of the field, is nonhabitual at the level of the actor.

The following quotation from a relatively young individual who had recently obtained his first job as executive chef at an upper-middle-status restaurant in New York, and had yet to build a reputation, provides a good illustration. This individual takes an acutely deliberate approach to cognizing food, consciously considering the categories that bound his thinking when he designs dishes:

Like this barramundi dish, it's like a papaya gazpacho, tamarind, yogurt, marcona almonds, but also has bacalao in it. And I was walking through the Essex Market here, and there are lots of Spanish ingredients, and the papaya smells really good and I said "Wow." And I also thought about tomatoes, tomatoes are now starting to come into season. And I thought of gazpacho and I thought "Why not do gazpacho with it?" So I did that. And I needed something creamy, and I needed something crunchy. So I put almonds. Something salty. So I think about Spanish, and how Spanish use bacalao. I put candied lemons in there. It's got yogurt, I put it in cans and make a foam out of that. I don't know if you've ever seen that before. What else? The sopressata for a little meaty, and sopressata oil in there. . . . I think about textures, I think about . . . the sweetness. What level do I want to be higher? Do I want more heat? And I'll . . . and it all balances off of each other. (Chef at an upper-middle-status restaurant in New York City)

Not only does this respondent rely on deliberate cognition and a highly reflective consideration of a swath of food categories to conceive innovative dishes, he also delineates lines of action in his cooking practices that are nonhabitual for him. Indeed, chefs such as this one are often invested in challenging established food categories (see Leschziner 2006; Leschziner and Dakin 2011). The following quotation from a young chef at an upper-middle-status restaurant in New York shows another example of how those with relatively short tenures at restaurants with considerable status deliberately develop lines of action to respond to the structural pressures they face, and create dishes through a combination of deliberate cognition and an automatic reliance on institutionalized ideas:

Innovation, as a chef, we strive to, I strive to be innovative and be creative. There are 21,000 restaurants in New York City, you have to have, you have to be different, you



*have* to, because if you're not, you're just not going to be in for, people are not going to come down to your restaurant. So in a way you have to be innovative and you have to know what your customer wants. Once you have that, you're going to be very successful. So we try to do a little bit of both, we try to be innovative, and we also, we learn, we know our customers, we get to know what they like and then feed them exactly what they like. (Chef at an upper-middle-status restaurant in New York City)

Trying to be innovative and offering his customers what they like is precisely the structural pressure to which this chef responds by designing a menu that has unusual twists along with traditional items and classical preparations. While a bit older and with a longer tenure at the restaurant than the individual cited previously, this chef still has to make a name for himself to ensure a successful career in the field. In short, deliberate attempts to create innovative food are characteristic of a phase in a chef's career that is nonhabitual for the individual, but routine at the level of the field.

Attempts to create innovative food are what Dewey ([1939] 1967:43; see also Whitford 202:338) calls an end-in-view. In contrast to the conceptualization of goals as well-defined values driving instrumental action associated with rational action theory, Dewey regards ends as indissociable from means and the local conditions from which they arise. In this way, while thinking deliberately and acting nonhabitually to create innovative dishes is an end for a chef, it also operates as a means to the extent that, combined with the automatic and habitual approaches that have become second nature to him, it guides his line of action. Means and ends, automatic and deliberate cognition, and habitual and nonhabitual practices thus combine in a complex, nuanced interplay.

Chefs at different stages in their careers face other kinds of structural pressures. For instance, a renowned chef who has worked at high-end restaurants for years and now wishes to open his own establishment serving more casual food faces the pressures that come from customers' expectations for a certain culinary style, and even for particular signature dishes. Such a chef is likely to create new dishes that blend the refined cuisine for which he is known with the casual style he had envisioned for the new restaurant, combining the automatic cognition and habitual practices that developed over years of working on high-end dishes with deliberate thinking and nonhabitual practices to move toward a simpler style.

Data such as these demonstrate that chefs at any stage of their careers and in any work conditions face situations that, while routine at the level of the field, lead them to think deliberately and develop nonhabitual lines of action alongside more automatic forms of cognition and habitual practices. This is not merely the result of field pressures but the layering of automatic and deliberate cognition that we should expect to find in most habitual and nonhabitual lines of action. Just as deliberative cognition relies on some automatic processes, and can become automatic and habitual itself, automatic cognition and habitual action are not reducible to dispositional action but rather involve a solidification of desires and choices, and a commitment to a course of action (see Dewey [1922] 2002).

Chefs face unexpected situations in their work, go through different phases in their careers, move from one restaurant to another, and move from one field position to another. Even during settled times (Swidler 1986), they regularly face changing conditions that make automatic thinking and habitual practices ineffective, thus encouraging deliberate cognition and nonhabitual practices (DiMaggio 1997). For instance, a chef may run a restaurant with a successful formula, but if there is an economic recession, she will have to respond to new conditions in ways that are not habitual for her. That field conditions change regularly and actors are encouraged to think deliberately in response, are characteristics that are not particular to cuisine, as we have argued, but rather the product of the normal dynamics of fields.

Below, we revisit these issues in broader theoretical terms, drawing out the implications of our two case studies to further the understanding of cognition and action in field theory.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION: THINKING BEYOND FOOD AND SEX

Bourdieu's field theory is, as its core, a theory of practice (Ortner 1984) and one that advanced what for many is an inspired resolution to the duality of agency and structure. For as Bourdieu reasoned, the structures of the mind and the structures of the social world represent two "orders" that, while objectively distinct, are nevertheless recursively co-constitutive (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). As such, in Bourdieusian sociology, and field theory more broadly, the minds of agents do not precede social structure but, rather, emerge as an objectification of it in the form of the durable and transposable dispositions of the "habitus" (Bourdieu 1977, [1979] 1984). These dispositions, being subconscious and embodied, powerfully organize cognition and practice such that agents act in the world effectively, even virtuously, in a manner that requires little of the calculating rational self-interest proposed by rational action theory. And this is precisely the point: the Bourdieusian actor appeals to social theorists because she is an effective, socially situated agent whose practice bears the imprint of social structure but without the overly socialized or excessively instrumentalist cognitive processes proposed by socialization theorists or economists, respectively.

But perhaps the subconscious, Bourdieusian dispositional actor, and the model of practice upon which field theory is based, represents less a final resolution than one, unsustainable end point of the swing of a pendulum. Indeed, to the extent that field research has been trained on automatic, dispositional cognitive processes, it glosses or ignores altogether the active, reflective dimensions of cognition that underpin practice (i.e., the "thinking" component of practice). Surely the emphasis on subconscious disposition goes a long way to rectify shortcomings in previous models of practice, but at the same time it runs the risk of producing yet another impoverished account of cognition and action. In this article, we are not proposing the reintroduction of deliberate thinking at the expense of automatic cognition. Instead, we are questioning the very terms of the debate wherein cognition and practice are theorized to be *either* reflective and nonhabitual *or* automatic and habitual. In short, while we do not dispute that cognition and practice may, depending on the situation, be rooted disproportionately in automatic or deliberate processes, we believe that theorizing from the outset a dichotomous model does a great disservice to understanding how cognition works in practice, not least because such a model occludes what may be most sociologically interesting in theorizing action.

To make this point, we draw from data on cognition in two quite distinct contexts, the sexual field and the field of high cuisine. Whereas the latter is an occupational field organized by formal positions and highly institutionalized systems of evaluation, the former is organized as a kind of collective sexual life with no formal structures or pathways, no institution conferring credibility or status, and placement in social space with far less stability. Indeed, in a sexual field, a bad hair day can diminish one's status, at least temporarily, whereas the same can hardly be said for an elite chef. Nevertheless, despite their differences, these fields are similar to the extent that they foster processes of cognition and practice that are irreducible to subconscious disposition on one hand or conscious deliberation on the other. That instances of action that bring together automatic and deliberate cognition are common across them underscores the point that fields, by their very nature, produce structural pressures that facilitate both forms of cognition irrespective of the particular substance and organizational configuration of any given field. Such

structural pressures militate against a wholly automatic, dispositional cognitive process and constitute precisely the social contexts in which the “thinking” part of cognition, and the interplay between automatic and deliberate cognition, is likely to occur.

In light of our argument, we believe that a stratified or “dual” model of cognition, while useful for analytically parsing through distinct components of practice, nevertheless imposes an impoverished conception of action that produces a reductionist understanding of practice. Indeed, the notion that cognition may be both automatic and deliberate, and that the conditions of social life will shape their relative preponderance, is an idea with increasing rhetorical support across a variety of sociological approaches (Archer 2010; Cerulo 2006, 2010; DiMaggio 1997, 2002; Elder Vass 2007; Giddens 1979; Lizardo and Strand 2010; Martin 2010; Swidler 1986, 2001; Vaisey 2008a, 2008b, 2009) but one that has yet to show their interplay in field theory for any given practice. Rather, to date, the analysis of practice in field theory has tended to rest on the Bourdieusian, dispositional actor, and automaticity and deliberation have been situated as oppositional modes of cognition that can be assigned in an either/or fashion. Vaisey (2009), for instance, argues for a dual-process model of cognition wherein the relative preponderance of each form of consciousness depends, in any given case, on the “demands of social interaction” (p. 1687). Nevertheless to illustrate the stratified nature of consciousness, Vaisey borrows the metaphor of an elephant and a rider from Haidt (2005), where the elephant represents practical consciousness, and the rider discursive consciousness. Not surprisingly, as the metaphor suggests, the dual-process model for Vaisey tends to reduce to a Bourdieusian model of automatic cognition wherein the elephant, by dint of its sheer size and power, drives the ride (i.e., discursive consciousness is all but relegated to a theoretical possibility).

This is not entirely surprising given the disciplinary origins of the dual-process model in experimental research on social cognition (see Bargh 1994; Bargh and Chartrand 1999; Haidt 2001, 2005; Lieberman 1997). But it is precisely for this reason that we urge caution when privileging so strongly a dual-process model that dichotomizes automatic and deliberate cognition. For because laboratory experiments do not situate actors in the context of real-world conditions, including the structural field pressures highlighted in this article, the findings from experimental cognitive research simply cannot weigh in on the relationship of automatic to deliberate cognition across social settings.<sup>30</sup> Certainly the findings of the present article suggest that social context will bear on modes of cognition in ways that may be otherwise obscured by laboratory research.

Moving forward, to better understand how individuals undertake actions in a field, we would do well to liberate our theories of action from the chains of a dichotomous framework, which limit our capacity to understand the ways in which automatic and deliberate cognition, and habitual and nonhabitual action, combine fluidly to inform paths of action. Furthermore, the dichotomous framework typically entails an understanding of action as a singular unit. However, actions are not self-standing units, each constituted by distinct means and ends, as pragmatists have rightly noted (Dewey [1939] 1967, [1922] 2002), but rather instances embedded in a stream of actions, wherein ends are never just ends, but may operate as means for directing action and means for further ends (Dewey, [1939] 1967:43; Whitford 2002:37–38). Individuals shape one action after the other, building on desires, needs, skills, and resources obtained in and through previous actions (cf. Swidler 1986). Thus, means and ends are not ontologically separate components of action but rather two instances that differ only temporally.

We suggest drawing on a pragmatist conceptualization of action because we believe it provides the tools to develop a more expansive understanding of action that avoids the perils of seeing either rational action that follows externally imposed ends (as in rational action

theory) or dispositional action that follows the subconscious cognitive schema of the habitus (as in field theory and sociological approaches inspired in the dual-process model of cognition). From a pragmatist viewpoint, we can explain action that may be purposive, without assuming that it follows ends that are separate from the conditions of action, as well as action that is driven by an end, but with no clear sense of how to achieve it (see Winship 2004). And, finally, one must not forget the all too common day-to-day action in a field that unfolds with no clear end or purpose (Dewey ([1939] 1967; Withford 2002).

Such a model, inspired by pragmatism, seeks to avoid *a priori* assumptions about the nature of action. Actors may have ideas about what they want to do, but they respond to particular situations in their environment when undertaking actions. Insofar as they develop paths of action in response to particular contextual conditions, their goals, dispositions, and habits will also change in response to social context. By examining the ways in which actors “muddle along” and take one action after another, combining deliberation with automatic thinking, and habitual and creative action, we can better address the “thinking problem” in field theory. As we showed in our case studies, this approach paves the way to explain the conditions that may encourage the preponderance of one type of cognition and action or another.

Similarly, the model we propose enables us to address the “problem of change” in field theory, for once we understand that practice in a field may be purposive but not necessarily rational, that individuals may act with no clear road map (lacking either clear ends or knowledge of the right means), and that they may think and act in ways that combine different forms of cognition and practice, we can begin to understand how cognition and action establish the possibilities of field change. That is, we can begin to explain how field change can arise not just from external forces that cause an upheaval of previously settled lives but also from the actions of field members who, in the context of the routine practices of the field, act in ways that fail to reproduce it.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, if individuals think both automatically and deliberately, and if fields facilitate the former but also encourage the latter, we can expect that some actors, on occasion, will act in ways that depart from or go against the grain of the prevailing paths of action, whether they do it purposively, by accident, or by virtue of actions that combine means and ends in new ways. In some of these instances, these practices will gain traction, producing new, shared ways of approaching old situations (see Herrigel 2008). Such innovations may, over time, become institutionalized, to constitute habitual practices and, eventually, new dispositions. In short, here is a process of field change catalyzed by small-scale transformations internal to the field. Hence, by addressing the “thinking problem” in field theory, sociologists will incorporate into their analysis a critical agent of change (i.e., the actors that populate the field itself). But this will surely require thinking beyond food and sex, and thinking in deliberate and reflective ways to prevent the schemas of dispositional action from becoming an automatic epistemological disposition among scholars of the field.

## NOTES

1. This is not to imply that field members are by definition strategic in their actions. Neither is it to suggest that actors are necessarily aware of the forces that may inform their actions, nor that they re-cognize the field with each and every action. Rather, the point is to highlight cognitive processes required for social fields to act as fields.
2. We refer to neoinstitutionalism in sociology and organizational analysis here because, together with Bourdieu’s field theory, it is a paradigmatic case of the overemphasis of automatic cognition at the expense of more reflective dimensions of thinking.
3. For a more general critique of the treatment of habitual routine practice in sociological theory, see Archer (2010).

4. See Fligstein and McAdam (2011, 2012b) for a related point with respect to collective action in fields.
5. For a discussion of Fligstein and McAdam's (2011) arguments, see Goldstone and Useem (2012) and Fligstein and McAdam's (2012a) response.
6. Where Bourdieu observes (what could be conceived as) "internally wrought" field change, he identifies this change either as a consequence of the influx of new players, and the resulting change in competition and rewards (Bourdieu [1997] 2000) or as a result of processes of cultural imitation (Bourdieu [1979] 1984). We suggest a broader set of internal processes conducive to field change that emerge in practices that are routine at the level of the field. We thereby expand the possibilities for field change from the inside out.
7. Fligstein and McAdam (2011) make the same observation regarding the problem of explaining change in field theory. To rectify this problem, Fligstein and McAdam note both the possibility of internally and externally driven change, though their focus here is on those sources that are external to the field.
8. There exists a significant sociological literature on deliberation as a form of collective problem solving (Berrien and Winship 1999, 2003; Gibson 2012; Winship 2004), but this literature analyzes decision making as a collective enterprise and is therefore outside the scope of our examination of individual cognitive processes in a field.
9. For an application of the "dual-process" model to sociology, see Vaisey (2008a, 2008b, 2009) and Lizardo and Strand (2010).
10. While our focus on deliberate cognition runs parallel with recent insights from the reflexivity literature (Archer 2010; Wiley 2010), we suggest that this latter conception of action tends to consolidate rather than disentangle a dichotomous conception of action as rooted in either dispositional or deliberate cognition.
11. In this article, we draw on Bourdieu's concept of the specific habitus, as opposed to the original habitus. Whereas the original habitus refers to those schemas and dispositions acquired in childhood as a function of socialization in the family (Bourdieu [1979] 1984:169–75), the specific habitus refers to a schema that develops in the context of one's position in a field where one seeks to be a player (Bourdieu [1997] 2000:99–100).
12. We must also note, however, that the emphasis on social reproduction weakened over Bourdieu's career. Whereas his earlier books emphasized the role of social structure (see Bourdieu 1977, [1979] 1984), his later work moved closer to practice (see Bourdieu 1998).
13. The conceptualization of schemas we present here is associated with the connectionist model of cognition (see Neisser 1967; Rumelhart 1980).
14. The argument that reasoning is not used to motivate action but to justify it has indeed been raised to critique the toolkit theory of action (Swidler 1986, 2001). See Lizardo and Strand (2010), Martin (2010), and Vaisey (2008a, 2008b, 2009).
15. See Archer (2010) for a historical critique of Bourdieu's concept of habitus and the more general problem of contemporary explanations of cognition and practice that rely too heavily on disposition.
16. Much current research in cognitive psychology shows that classifying all cognition into two separate categories (most typically, automatic and deliberate, or system 1 and system 2), as dual-process models do, is untenable for two main reasons: (1) many acts of cognition combine the two cognitive processes, and (2) what is referred to as automatic cognition or system 1 encompasses many modes of cognition that are too different in nature to be lumped together into one category. For critiques of dual-process models, see Evans (2006, 2012); Frank, Cohen, and Sanfey (2009); Glöckner (2008); Macchi and Bagassi (2012); and Roser and Gazzaniga (2004).
17. See Elder-Vass (2007) for a critique of Bourdieu's theory along similar lines. Of particular relevance here is Elder-Vass's (2007:340) claim that reasons are partial and contingent causes of individuals' actions in that they codetermine individuals' decisions, the latter of which are stored as neural networks in the brain (i.e., dispositions) and in turn codetermine actions.
18. Without a doubt, conditions in actual practice cannot be neatly sorted into schematic categories but rather fall somewhere in a continuum. As we note below, pragmatist insights regarding the relationship between habitual and nonhabitual practice may be particularly helpful in explaining this (e.g., see Dewey [1922] 2002).
19. Cognition may become automatic not only on account of subconscious dispositions but also because of environmental scaffolding that elicits particular patterns of cognition and lines of action. In this sense, one may make a finer distinction in automatic cognition beyond the distinctions we focus on in the present article—one that draws from either or, simultaneously, both, subconscious schemas and



environmental cues in the course of delineating a line of action (DiMaggio 1997). For more on the role of environmental scaffolding on cognition, see Hutchins (1995) and Lave (1988); for explicitly sociological analysis of the relationship of cognition and the physical environment, see Beunza and Stark (2012), Knorr Cetina (2008), and Stark (2009).

20. The data for this section of the article are based on a qualitative study of a large, North American, metropolitan queer community. The study combines in-depth, semistructured interviews of 70 gay and bisexual participants conducted between 2005 and 2007, with participant observation in the Village between 2004 and 2009.
21. The following classifications are best thought of as ideal types: "Leather men" are white gay men, aged 35 years and older, who find leather apparel erotic. "Bears" are gay "average Joes" (Hennen 2008), hirsute, stocky, dressed in working-class, masculine clothing styles and hiking boots or nondescript tennis shoes. "Twinks" are white gay men, in their mid-20s or younger, with lean builds, fashionable urban clothing, hip, pricey footwear, and well-coiffed hairdos. "Jocks" are gay men in their 20s to early 40s with athletic to very muscular bodies who sport a masculine affect.
22. This is not to imply that deliberate cognition was not present at an earlier time but simply to say that, once established, self-presentation may follow an inculcated disposition that no longer requires active cognition.
23. One of the authors conducted ethnographic research with elite chefs in New York City in 2004 and 2005 and in San Francisco in 2004, to gather data about how chefs make choices about their work and careers. The data for this article are based on in-depth, semistructured interviews with 45 executive chefs at some of the best restaurants in the two cities and observation in each of the restaurant kitchens. These data were supplemented with individuals in other occupational ranks in the kitchen, as well as persons in other occupations in the restaurant world, including restaurant managers, servers, designers, and purveyors. Elite chefs, as categorized here, are those who work in restaurants that have been awarded between one and four stars (the maximum) in the *New York Times*, and are classified as either expensive or very expensive, and three or four stars in *San Francisco Chronicle*, classified as either expensive or very expensive in the magazine *San Francisco*.
24. To be sure, chefs are not insulated from the world of cuisine beyond their local environments. For one thing, they look to other culinary fields to obtain new ideas (hence their regular travels to eat abroad). But they do not orient their actions to the actions of chefs in other fields; rather, they may draw on these chefs' ideas to respond to the actions of chefs in their own field and remain competitive. In addition, though chefs may own restaurants in multiple locations, they adapt their restaurants to the local "rules of the game," which undoubtedly vary field by field, and orient their actions to what their local peers do to ensure success.
25. The category "ethnic" is here understood phenomenologically, after chefs' views. That chefs at elite restaurants do not need to know what others at "ethnic" restaurants do, because they do not orient their actions to these others, means that "ethnic" restaurants are not members of the field of high cuisine.
26. This definition departs from extant conceptualizations of the field of cuisine (Ferguson 1998, 2004; Rao et al. 2003), which include more actors and institutions (namely, food critics and writers, producers, and consumers) as well as larger geographical spaces, generally encompassing an entire country. It must be noted, however, that these conceptualizations are based on Ferguson's (1998) foundational definition of a "gastronomic field," a social space that encompasses much more than the world of restaurants. We conceive of a culinary field in the more narrow way presented here.
27. Such dispositions are, in turn, sustained by being regularly enacted (see Bourdieu 1998).
28. Names of chefs and restaurants are not used because interviews have been kept anonymous and confidential.
29. Restaurants have been classified into three status categories namely, middle, upper-middle, and high status.
30. With regard to laboratory-based cognitive research, we suggest that the conditions of a field and the conditions of a laboratory setting are two significantly different contexts that cannot be reduced to the same, lest we treat an apple as an orange. There are reasons to believe that the kind of split-second decision making that laboratory experiments or closed-ended survey questions elicit (i.e., "hot cognition") is qualitatively different from the kinds of cognitive processes in a field wherein actors are highly invested in the stakes of the field, where their actions are highly consequential for their lives, and where decision making, by and large, is not split second but, on the contrary, evolves over a different metric of time. At the same time, we recognize that using interview data to discern forms of

cognition carries with it its own set of methodological perils—for instance, when asked to account for their actions, interview subjects may have the tendency to articulate a degree of deliberateness not reflected in the action itself. This potential problem may be circumvented by eliciting responses to questions concerning “how” actions were taken rather than why they were taken. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that respondents sometimes demonstrate automatic cognition even when they are asked to justify their actions, as in those cases when respondents convey the absence of a specific rationale for their actions.

31. See Herrigel (2008) for a very good example of how field change can occur through a combination of habitual and nonhabitual action and purposeful and nonpurposeful action.

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# The Practical Organization of Moral Transactions: Gift Giving, Market Exchange, Credit, and the Making of Diaspora Bonds

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## Abstract

The fusion of gift giving and market exchange elements in economic transactions creates practical difficulties. How can the parties involved agree about the meaning of their engagement and the value of the exchanged objects? This article tackles the topic—an important one in economic sociology—by looking at moral transactions (i.e., transactions that combine pecuniary and ethical considerations). Through an empirical study of the issuance of Irish and Israeli diaspora bonds during the 1920s and 1950s, respectively, I identify practices that help actors overcome the difficulties inherent in moral transactions. *Clarification practices* allow actors to treat the exchange as either gift giving or market exchange. *Blurring practices* allow actors to complete a transaction without agreeing on its meaning. Blurring practices require creating a *zone of indeterminacy*, that is, a context in which the parties can cooperate without agreeing on their relationships. The broader implications of these practices are then discussed.

## Keywords

gift giving, market exchange, credit and loans, zone of indeterminacy, morals and markets

This article develops an analytical framework for understanding the organization of moral transactions, that is, economic transactions that explicitly combine moral and pecuniary interests. Socially responsible investment, venture philanthropy, and ethical consumerism are but a few examples of this increasingly important type of exchange.<sup>1</sup>

That gift giving and market exchange do not belong to entirely different spheres is now a common idea among economic sociologists (Bird-David and Darr 2009; Darr 2003; Davis

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1996; and, more generally, Granovetter 1985). Rather than adhere to neat analytical models, actors combine elements of gift giving and market exchange in order to leverage philanthropy, extract special treatment, or sometimes gain market advantage. To the extent that this is so, however, practical difficulties arise for participants in moral transactions. If gift giving and market exchange exist along a continuum, there is no guarantee that the parties involved will attribute the same meaning to the object that changes hands. Mistaking an object intended as a gift for a commodity, or vice versa, is likely to result in conflict and a failed transaction. More fundamentally, given that gift giving and market exchange rely on conflicting principles of valuation, how can the two sides come to an agreement on the worth of the exchanged objects and the nature of the relations between the parties?

A dazzling array of practices, from the extension of loans to firms (Uzzi 1999) to “picking-up the bill” between friends (Llewellyn 2011b), can be interpreted as involving certain elements of gift giving and market exchange. In practice, however, in most instances actors discount the multifaceted aspect of the transaction and treat it as an instance of either gift giving or market exchange by using *clarification practices*. Clarification practices refer to various contextual cues, from price tags and gift wraps to formal contracts, which actors create in order to turn particular objects into unambiguous “gifts” or “commodities” (Zelizer 1994, 1996, 2000). The use of clarification practices reduces the likelihood of misunderstanding and helps establish an agreed-upon principle of valuation. Many exchanges that actors, and the social scientists who study them, treat unproblematically as being either gift giving or market exchange are accomplished through the use of clarification practices.

Sometimes, however, especially when actors seek to avoid the limits and obligations associated with gift giving or market exchange, they use *blurring practices* so as to prevent or defer the determination of the meaning of the transaction, or at least to render such determination impractical.

Blurring practices are particularly useful for understanding the organization of moral transactions. The moral valence of this type of exchange finds expression in the motivations of actors and in their self-defining character. That is, unlike idealized market exchange, in moral transaction, one or more of those involved wishes to maximize ethical *and* material utility, and this brings conflicting principles of valuation into clear tension. Furthermore, moral transactions implicate those involved as a certain kind of person (see Tavory 2011:281; also Silber 1998). For example, unlike a profit-oriented investment decision, the purchase of shares in a socially responsible mutual fund reveals something about the character of the purchaser. The self-defining aspect of moral transactions also implies that actors may choose to engage in such transactions in order to prove themselves as particular types of persons (Zelizer 1994).<sup>2</sup> Reducing the multivalent nature of moral transaction to market exchange would defeat the purpose of one or both of the parties because it would eviscerate a key cause for the transaction or rob the parties of the conscientious self-image they seek.<sup>3</sup>

Accomplishing moral transaction requires creating a *zone of indeterminacy*, that is, an institutional context within which actors can engage each other without sharing a consensus regarding the meaning of the object that changes hands and the rights and obligations that follow from the exchange. The creation and maintenance of a zone of indeterminacy are tremendous organizational challenges. Attempts to blur the meaning of a transaction are liable to be interpreted as sinister or deceitful manipulations. There are two aspects of the creation and maintenance of a zone of indeterminacy. On one hand, the zone must allow actors to attribute different interpretations to their mutual engagements. On the other hand, the zone of indeterminacy has to reduce the motivation to clarify the meaning of the transaction and thus allow actors not to explore the different meanings assigned to it.

To better understand how actors complete moral transactions, in this article I examine the floating of diaspora bonds, a unique type of moral transaction that bears surprising

contemporary relevance. Diaspora bonds are securities offered by a homeland government in order to raise capital from sympathetic members of its diaspora communities (Chander 2001; Ketkar and Ratha 2009). Instead of relying on fluctuating and sometimes prohibitively expensive financial markets, or the sheer generosity of their supporters, developing countries can use diaspora bonds as an opportunity to raise substantial sums at a borrowing price lower than what conventional investors may be willing to offer. For members of diaspora communities, diaspora bonds provide an opportunity to contribute to the development of their country of origin while enjoying the prospect of getting their money back, with interest. Anxious to cultivate nongovernmental sources for economic development, in recent years the World Bank has promoted the idea of diaspora bonds as one possible solution to chronic lack of capital in the developing world (Ketkar and Ratha 2009). Countries such as India, Sri Lanka, Ghana, Armenia, Rwanda, Nepal, and recently Greece either have launched or are preparing to launch diaspora bond campaigns.<sup>4</sup>

Choosing to study the overlay between gift giving and market exchange using the case of diaspora bonds may seem strange. Discussions of gift giving and market exchange in modern settings typically center on dyadic transactions between individuals.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, in diaspora bonds the recipient of the money is not a person but a state or an aspiring national movement. In addition, the scale and complexity of such projects necessitate the involvement of intermediary organizations. Rather than turning diaspora bonds into an odd case, however, these characteristics make diaspora bonds all the more relevant. Moral transactions often take place between individuals and large organizations and frequently rely on intermediaries (Dees and Anderson 2003; Silber 1998). Even seemingly simple moral transactions, like the purchase of fair trade coffee, rely on complex organizational structures that mediate between growers and consumers. In important respects, therefore, studying diaspora bonds provides an opportunity to explore moral transactions in a natural setting.

The article focuses on two early attempts to launch diaspora bonds—the Irish bond certificate project of 1920 and the Israel bond project that began in 1951. In the Irish case, the issue of the bonds led to conflicting demands that revolved precisely around the hybrid nature of the transaction and a second attempt to issue these bonds in 1921 failed. The Israeli bond, in contrast, increased the flow of funds to Israel and was instrumental in smoothing over disagreements between the Israeli government and key Jewish American organizations.

I begin my discussion by examining in more detail the concepts of gift giving, market exchange, and whatever lies between them. I then explore the production of moral transactions by examining the first issuance of the Irish and Israeli diaspora bonds. Next, I consider the second attempts to issue such bonds in order to understand the tensions involved in regulating moral transactions. This is followed by an examination of the practices and conditions that allow for their stabilization. Finally, I explore the challenge of creating moral transactions in other settings and examine the implications of my argument for economic sociology.

## ECONOMIC ACTION AND MORAL TRANSACTIONS

The writings of Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 2000) and Michel Callon (1998) provide a useful starting point for thinking about transactions that fall somewhere between the idealized models of gift giving and market exchange. Bourdieu argues that gift giving is neither an entirely disinterested nor an entirely interested practice. The sense of disinterestedness that constitutes gift giving is manufactured by actively preventing the calculation of the exchanged objects. While gifts are often reciprocated, the sanctioned delay between a gift and a counter-gift as well as their dissimilarity (reciprocating with the same gift is akin to refusing to accept it) makes it harder to compare gifts and creates a never-closing debt of



gratitude between the parties.<sup>6</sup> The social ties associated with gift giving (Mauss 1967), in other words, are a byproduct of the normative organization of this type of transaction.

Callon expands this insight by suggesting that in contrast with gift-giving, market exchange is constituted through the introduction of devices that facilitate calculation (1998; Callon and Muniesa 2005). The placing of commodities next to one another on a shelf in a supermarket, for example, facilitates a comparison of similar items in terms of price and quality and thus allows buyers to act a bit more like interested rational actors. Similarly, the use of money in markets facilitates the creation of equivalences between otherwise incommensurable objects and dramatically improves an actor's ability to calculate their value. The calculations involved in market exchange also have an important relational byproduct. At the completion of such transactions, no unclosed debts remain between the parties. The ability to interact without incurring unclosed debts permits the parties to remain strangers despite their ongoing engagement. Thus, the alienating effect of markets (Polanyi 1957; Simmel 1990; Weber 1978:637) is a byproduct of the organization of the marketplace.

In reality, in between these idealized models lies a whole spectrum of practices that combine elements of both gift giving and market exchange. Rather than simply enact innate propensities for trade (Smith 2001) or predetermined cultural codes (Mauss 1967), actors reflexively and creatively mix and match these practices in order to increase sales or extract special privileges (Bird-David and Darr 2009; Darr 2003; Davis 1996; Zelizer 1994). This does not imply that ideal models of market exchange and gift giving are irrelevant scholastic fancies. To the contrary, in addition to providing a frame of reference within which transactions can be evaluated, these models provide important templates for action. Actors can sometimes consciously shape or "perform" their transactional setting so as to generate transactions that more closely resemble the idealizations.<sup>7</sup>

Thinking about gift giving and market exchange as practices distinguished by the extent and type of calculations involved can provide us with a useful framework for exploring how people mix and match these practices, but it also highlights important practical and analytical difficulties. Most works in economic sociology assume that actors know and agree about whether they are engaging in gift giving or market exchange (Llewellyn 2011b is exceptional), but such an *a priori* assumption may not be tenable. If gift giving and market exchange exist along a continuum, the parties involved may sometimes disagree about the meaning of their common engagement.

Table 1 illustrates this problem. The outcome of a mismatch in interpretations can be dreadful. Treating an object intended as a gift instead as a commodity (lower left cell of the table) is likely to result in an estrangement between the parties. The receiver, in such case, may try to make a payment, or, even worse, she may begin haggling over the gift's value or desirability in an effort to extract a discount.<sup>8</sup> The giver in such a case is likely to interpret the response of the beneficiary as a sign of ingratitude or outright hostility. Treating commodities as gifts (the upper right cell in the table) would be injurious too. In such cases, the receiver may insist that no payment should be expected—thereby offending the giver who thinks of the transaction as strictly business. This problem is far from a theoretical issue. Since economic transactions, and moral transactions in particular, often involve elements of gift giving and market exchange, it is easy to see why an object given as a gift may sometimes be interpreted by the other side as a commodity or as an interested manipulation (Herrmann 1997). It is also easy to understand why commodities may be mistaken as gifts. When the orientations of the actors are heterogeneous, the meaning of the exchange may be even harder to pin down.

Perhaps more fundamentally, the combination of elements of gift giving and market exchange intensifies the problem of valuation. The stylized models of both types of exchange provide an answer to this problem. In market exchange, valuation is accomplished through the mechanism of price. The growing sociological literature on financial markets clarifies

**Table 1.** Agreement and Disagreement in Economic Transactions.

		Perspective of the giver	
		Giving an object as a gift	Selling an object as a commodity
Perspective of the receiver	Receiving an object as a gift	Mutually agreed gift giving	Misplaced gratitude/misplaced expectation for payment
	Buying an object as a commodity	Misplaced expectations for gratitude/misplaced haggling	Mutually agreed market exchange

that price setting is a complex accomplishment, but still, the principles of this process are fairly clear. Similarly, the stylized model of gift giving, with its emphasis on normative regulation, explains how actors accomplish such transactions and regulate their relationships. Importantly, however, the principles of valuation at play in these two types of transactions are different and conflicting. Engaging in comparisons—and trying to maximize profits and minimize costs—are acceptable in market exchange but are an affront when giving or receiving gifts. How, then, when engaging in transactions that combine elements of these practices, can two sides come to an agreement over the value of the exchanged objects and the social relations that exist between the parties?

Seen from a different angle, how can we account for actors' abilities to transact without assuming that the actors involved already agree about the meaning of their mutual engagement? A number of scholars suggest that the blurry boundaries between gift giving and market exchange create tensions (Bird-David and Darr 2009; Darr 2003; Herrmann 1997). What we now need is a framework to explain how actors manage such tensions when they arise and how, sometimes, tension-management practices result in successfully completed transactions.

### *Clarification Practices: Transaction through Consensus*

Viviana Zelizer is one of the few scholars to consider the practical implications of the blurred boundaries of gift giving and market exchange (1994, 1996, 2000, 2005).<sup>9</sup> In her work on the social uses of money, Zelizer notes that money can be used as compensation, gift, or entitlement. Each type of payment corresponds to and implies different social relations (1996:482). Cognizant of the possibility of misinterpretations, actors "earmark" their exchange medium so as to avoid misunderstandings or to assert their own interpretation of the encounter. Earmarking clarifies the meaning of the exchange and therefore helps actors avoid potentially damaging confusion.

Zelizer's work focuses on monetary transactions that are particularly liable to be interpreted as interested exchange, but her insights are relevant more broadly. Removing a price tag and wrapping an object, for example, can be understood as a type of earmarking that increases the likelihood that the receiver will identify the object as a gift. Wrapping not only declares the object as a gift but also literally prevents the calculation of its value (for a while). Placing a price tag in a prominent location, in contrast, enhances calculability and clarifies that one is dealing with a commodity.

More generally, the context within which an exchange takes place contains cues that allow both parties to agree about whether the transaction should be treated as gift giving or market exchange, even when both elements are present. When colleagues sing "Happy Birthday," you are not expected to negotiate or pay for the wrapped objects next to the cake even if you typically split bills. By the same token, most of us know that the objects on the supermarket shelf are commodities even if the label reads "second item for free."<sup>10</sup> As the last example illustrates, clarification is not simply a matter of naming. To clarify that a given transaction is, say, gift giving, one needs to shape the context of the interaction between parties so as to either eliminate the possibility of a counter-gift or render the comparisons of the objects that change hands somehow impractical (see Callon and Law 2005). Clarification practices allow actors to ignore or discount certain aspects of the exchange and treat it as an instance of either gift giving or market exchange. To refer to Table 1, earmarking preempts the possibility of misplaced haggling or misplaced gratitude by establishing consensus over the nature of the transaction prior to its taking place.

### *Blurring Practices: Transaction without Consensus*

Clarification practices are extremely effective at preventing misunderstandings and streamlining transactions. While shrewd observers may point out that many transactions combine elements of gift giving and market exchange, relatively few exchanges are *perceived* as hybrid transactions by those involved.

Some transactions, however, crucially depend on the perception of their hybrid nature. This point is particularly relevant for moral transactions. Socially responsible investments, for example, attract certain clients precisely because they are perceived as containing an element of disinterested giving and because engaging such action colors the investor in positive light (in his own eyes and in the eyes of others). Similarly, in order to encourage giving, fundraisers sometimes shower donors with discount cards whose benefits have significant economic value. One could probably attach a precise dollar figure to the comps that such discount cards offer. But that would defeat the purpose of this fundraising technique. The whole point in offering comps in return for monetary donation is to allow donors to indulge in the thought that they were very generous *and* to enjoy the benefits of the discount card without discounting the value of the later from the former. Thus, when one or both sides of the transaction wish to escape the limitations and obligations associated with either gift giving and market exchange, the actors may try to blur the meaning of the transaction.<sup>11</sup>

Carrying out such hybrid forms of exchange is a challenge. Attempts to blur the meaning of the exchange risk being perceived as deceitful efforts to avoid the costs or obligations associated with more straightforward transactions. The suggestion that particular commodities carry moral value because a fraction of the proceeds supports a worthy cause, for example, is often seen as a disingenuous marketing trick. Instead of gullibly accepting offers for moral transactions as they are presented, actors may clarify and reduce the complexity of the offer and focus on the dimension that is most pleasing to them. If the two sides differ in their interpretations, the transaction is likely to be held up.

To prevent actors from treating moral transactions as simple gifts or commodities, it is not enough to rhetorically weave together elements of these practices. Given that actors determine the meaning of a transaction based on many factors, one actor may still decide that the object that changes hand is, say, practically a gift, even if the other side presents it as a hybrid of gift and commodity. Instead, accomplishing moral transactions requires creating a zone of indeterminacy, a context within which the parties involved (or at least one of them) refrain from reducing the multiple meanings of the exchange to either gift giving or

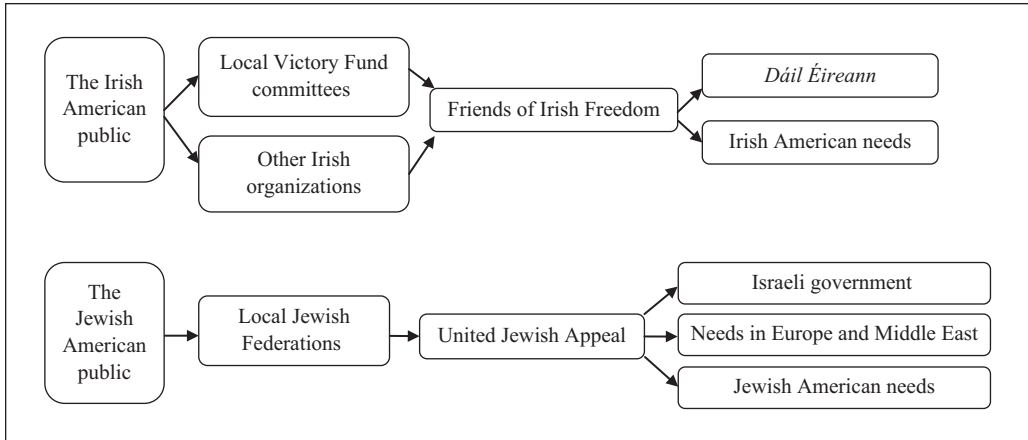
market exchange. First, the transaction should be arranged such that the two sides of the transaction are able to attribute *different* meanings to the exchange. This feat is accomplished by complicating the meaning of the transaction by weaving into the object that changes hands properties that are associated with gift giving and properties that are associated with market exchange. If market exchange is constituted through the introduction of calculative devices and gift giving through their withdrawal, the construction of moral transactions requires creating a delicate balance between calculability and incalculability. Second, the context of the transaction should be arranged so as to discourage the parties from exploring the differences in the interpretations they devise.<sup>12</sup> Successful construction of such a zone of indeterminacy may allow parties to attribute different meanings to their mutual engagement without this incongruence immediately becoming a matter of dispute.

### *Loans as a Special Case of Moral Transaction*

Loans illustrate the complexity of moral transactions particularly well. Extending a loan entails a provision of resources with the expectation of return (Carruthers 2005:356). Loans that are extended without specification of time and conditions of return resemble gifts and are typically extended to intimates (Offer 1997). In contrast, loans that include enforceable contracts, specifying the time frame, interest, and terms of redemption, resemble market exchange and are typically transacted between strangers.<sup>13</sup>

Regardless of the orientation of actors, loans always include a time lag between extension and return. This time lag is no different from the one that, according to Bourdieu, constitutes a gift. But a loan is not a gift. What distinguishes a loan from a gift is not simply the subjective motivations of the actors but also the legal framing and the various specifications of the loan that enhance the actors' abilities to calculate its value. The calculative devices (Callon and Muniesa 2005) that make loans more "market-like" also clarify the meaning of the transaction (signing a contract, for example, reduces the likelihood that one will confuse such a loan with a gift). Yet this is only part of the story. To increase the calculability of a loan, one can, for example, purchase for a known price from a third party an insurance policy against default. This strategy reduces the uncertainty associated with future behavior of the debtor by linking it to the perhaps less uncertain future of the insurer. For a loan to really resemble market exchange, however, it needs to be liquid. Liquidity allows for closing the time gap that separates credit from other types of market transactions for a *known* price. The ability to manipulate the temporal schedule of a loan and receive a return prior to maturation makes loans almost indistinguishable from money (Carruthers 2005:370).

Credit transactions are also particularly liable to generate productive ambiguity regarding their nature. In the period between the extension of a loan and the date of redemption, each side to the exchange can tell herself a story about what the exchange was all about. The lender may believe that the transaction was more of a gift than a pecuniary investment, while the borrower may think that the transaction was strictly business and that, therefore, she owes her creditor nothing but principal and interest. The reverse possibility is not farfetched either. Importantly, during the loan's period, neither side may be particularly well equipped or eager to determine, once and for all, what the exchange is all about. In other words, the temporal structure of credit transactions helps to generate a zone of indeterminacy wherein both lender and borrower can attribute to the loan the meanings that they are most comfortable with, without having to struggle.<sup>14</sup> These processes—and some of their outcomes—are very much evident in the issuance of diaspora bonds.



**Figure 1.** The organizational structure of Irish and Jewish fundraising in the United States.

## ORGANIZING MORAL TRANSACTIONS

During the late 1910s and 1940s, the Irish Republicans and Zionist movements teamed up with diasporic organizations in the United States—the Friends of Irish Freedom (FOIF) and the Jewish Federations, respectively—to establish large-scale philanthropic fundraising apparatuses (Doorley 2005; Stock 1987). These apparatuses, the Irish Victory Fund (IVF) and the United Jewish Appeal (UJA), funneled large sums of money from the United States to the struggles in Ireland and Israel (Lainer-Vos 2013).<sup>15</sup>

Despite their successes, the IVF and the UJA experienced severe and roughly parallel crises. These crises were related to their philanthropic character. Since donations were given with no expectation of monetary return, Irish Americans and Jewish Americans were willing to part with substantial sums of money (Lehrman 1949, 1950; McCartan 1932). Yet, as gifts, the IVF and UJA monies carried burdensome obligations: The diaspora organizations demanded a share of the collection for their domestic needs and insisted on having a say in determining the use of the rest of the money (Raphael 1982, 1989; Stock 1987:21; Tansill 1957). To overcome the limits of philanthropic gift giving, the nascent Irish and Israeli governments eventually decided to float bonds and sell them to their American supporters.

### *Issuing the Irish Bond Certificates*

The Irish leadership expected their bond campaign to be quick and simple, but turning the Irish government in formation into a debtor proved to be anything but. First, the leaders of the FOIF strongly resisted the bond plan. Gift giving, from their perspective, was the proper method with which to support the Irish struggle. New York Congressman Bourke Cockran, who was closely associated with the FOIF, insisted that “the idea that a loan could be floated on normal financial grounds [is] preposterous. . . . [Money] might be raised but never as cold financial investment” (Fitzpatrick 2003:143). Commercial banks, too, refused to issue the Irish bonds.<sup>16</sup> Faced with these objections, Eamon de Valera, the president of the Irish Republic who was then on a visit to the United States, decided to establish a new organization to issue and sell the bonds directly—the American Commission on Irish Independence (ACII) (see Carroll 1985).

Since the American government had yet to recognize the Irish Republic as a sovereign state, the selling of Irish bonds as standard bonds contravened the Blue Skies laws, which



regulated trade in securities in most states in the United States. To overcome this hurdle, the ACII resolved to sell bond certificates instead of regular bonds. According to the prospectus, at the time of purchase the bond certificate was a gift bearing no financial obligations. It would become an interest-bearing bond at an annual rate of 5% only if and when British forces evacuated Ireland and the Republic achieved international recognition (see Carroll 2002:105). The absence of a clear and unconditional date for redemption reduced the calculability of the bond certificates and added to their gift-like quality. Nevertheless, de Valera believed that the interest rate of the bond certificates, which was slightly higher than the one offered by U.S. treasury bonds (Homer and Sylla 1996:341–52), would generate some investment appeal.<sup>17</sup>

Mindful of the FOIF's criticism, de Valera was careful not to present the bond certificates as an ordinary investment: "We . . . expect subscriptions only from those who seek to serve a good cause, not from those who want immediate pecuniary profit." At the same time, he assured the public that the bonds would be redeemed.<sup>18</sup> The Irish bond drive opened in January 1920. A typical ad for the campaign read, "Give to Ireland and lend for Liberty."<sup>19</sup> A combination of patriotic and pecuniary interests was supposed to lure subscribers to invest more of their money than they otherwise would have been willing to give as a gift.

### *Issuing the Israel Bonds*

Faced with a dire economic crisis and never-ending struggles over the UJA proceeds, in August 1950 the Israeli government decided to float Israeli bonds in the United States. The Israeli initiative placed the Jewish Federations in a sensitive position. Beginning in 1948, many Jewish Federations borrowed from American banks, using the assets of wealthy community members as collateral, and forwarded the money to Israel. Competition from an Israeli bond project for the generosity of donors, they now feared, could drive them into bankruptcy. The Federation leaders also questioned the integrity of the bond plan, seeing it is as an aggressive attempt to squeeze gifts in disguise from sympathizers. The appropriate way for American Jews to support Israel, they argued, was with "free dollars" rather than "debt dollars."<sup>20</sup> To assuage the Federations' concerns, Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion pledged unwavering support for the UJA but, like de Valera, he proceeded with the bond plan.

When the Israeli government decided to issue its bonds, the United States already recognized Israel as a sovereign state. Nevertheless, commercial banks refused to underwrite the Israeli bonds. Therefore, as in the Irish case, the Israeli government established a new organization, the American Financial and Development Corporation for Israel (AFDCI), to issue and sell the bonds directly to subscribers.

The Israeli leadership considered paying subscribers a high interest rate in return for the risk associated with their investment, but this strategy was prohibitively expensive.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the AFDCI offered a moderately attractive interest rate of 3.5%, about half a percent above the interest offered by U.S. Treasury bonds at the time (see Homer and Sylla 1996:370–6). The AFDCI leaders, however, realized that interest rate alone could not secure the investment appeal of their bond. The partners of Kuhn Loeb & Co., an investment firm, imagined a particularly troubling scenario:

A man, at a public meeting, enthused by the situation might buy \$100,000 worth of bonds and a few days later, in light of circumstances or evaporating emotion, might decide to throw the issue back on the market. If there were many of these, it would have the effect of depressing the price . . . and seriously interfering with current sales.<sup>22</sup>

This problem was related to the gift-like properties of the bonds. Since pecuniary considerations alone could not render the Israeli bonds attractive, selling them required emotional appeals and social pressuring. While such tactics might generate a large subscription, they were also transient and provided a weak assurance that subscribers would actually hold onto their bonds for a long duration.

Handling the drop-in-price scenario required a delicate balancing act. To prevent a collapse in the bonds' price, the government decided that the bonds would be nontransferable for the first three years of the drive.<sup>23</sup> The nontransferability clause effectively prevented pricing, and therefore also declining prices, but it had a serious drawback. During the period of nontransferability, calculating the price of the bonds was impossible and any downbeat news from Israel could lead to the conclusion that the bonds would never be repaid and were therefore, as the Federation leaders suspected, a gift in disguise. To increase confidence in the bonds, the AFDCI introduced a number of creative privileges. First, the AFDCI promised that the bonds would be convertible to Israeli pounds at any time in Israel. Jewish Americans who traveled to Israel could use the bond as a traveler's check even prior to maturation. This privilege created a price for the bonds, in Israeli currency, and hence increased their calculability. Second, in case of the death of a subscriber, Israel allowed the inheritors to redeem the bond immediately without penalties. This privilege, which turned the bond into a kind of life insurance policy, was designed to attract elderly subscribers. It created a dollar price for the bonds, for a limited group of bondholders. In addition, the AFDCI sold two kinds of bonds: savings bonds for a period of 15 years and coupon bonds for 12 years (where the interest was paid in 24 semiannual installments).<sup>24</sup> The prompt payment of interest on the coupon bonds and the special privileges allowed some subscribers to receive payments back almost immediately. This limited flow of cash back to subscribers did not turn the Israeli bonds into a lucrative investment but it increased their calculability and made it harder to claim that the bonds were merely a gift in disguise.

The "Independence Issue" Israel bond campaign launched in May 1951. Striking a hopeful chord, the AFDCI organized a special exposition that reflected "the transition in Israel—from a Land of Promise to a Land of Performance."<sup>25</sup> The bonds themselves were marketed as a moral investment. An ad in *Life* magazine, for example, explained, "Every time you invest in the State of Israel Bond, you invest in far more than 3½% interest. You also invest in the dignity of man and the future of democracy" (October 8, 1951).

## REGULATING MORAL TRANSACTIONS

At first glance, the Irish and Israeli bond projects look similar. Both projects attempted to strike a balance between pecuniary and ethical considerations, and, judged in economic terms, both drives had considerable success. In the Irish case, more than 300,000 subscribers purchased bond certificates for an overall sum of \$5,123,640, by far the largest amount ever raised by the Irish in the United States (Carroll 2002:23). During the three years of the first Israeli bond drive, the AFDCI sold \$145 million worth of bonds to more than 700,000 subscribers (Rehavi and Weingarten 2004). While the Israeli drive raised far more money, even after controlling for inflation, both projects dramatically increased the flow of funds to the respective governments. But a close examination of the second attempt to float these bonds, in 1921 and 1954, reveals that the two ventures yielded radically different outcomes.

### *The Collapse of the Irish Bonds*

The financial success of the Irish bond did not end the arguments between de Valera and the FOIF. At the center of the conflict there remained questions about what the bond certificates

actually were, what obligations followed from their purchase, and what rights were associated with the organization of the campaign. When, in early 1920, de Valera issued an appeasing statement toward England, John Devoy, the seasoned leader of the FOIF, charged,

Every dollar subscribed, either to the Victory Fund or for the Bond Certificate of the Irish Republic, was given on the distinct understanding that the policy announced in Dublin [i.e., declaration of independence] . . . would be firmly adhered to. Any fundamental change now would be a break of faith and would bring defeat and disaster. (*Gaelic American*, February 21, 1920)<sup>26</sup>

Emphasizing the intentionality of givers and subscribers, Devoy overlooked the market-like properties of the bond certificate terms and construed both transactions as instances of gift giving. Using this interpretation, he insisted that the Irish American community had earned the right to play a role in *shaping* the Irish struggle. Unlike the case in market exchange, wherein exchange results in complete alienation, the FOIF leaders felt that some ongoing connection they had with the bonds' proceeds entitled them to pass judgment on de Valera's use of the money.

The Irish Republican leaders had a different interpretation of the Irish American money and the relationships between the Irish at home and in the United States. Early on, de Valera and his associates emphasized the nonpecuniary aspects of the bond drive, but this emphasis soon changed. In response to the FOIF accusations of misuse of the bonds' money, Joseph McGarrity, de Valera's close ally, explained,

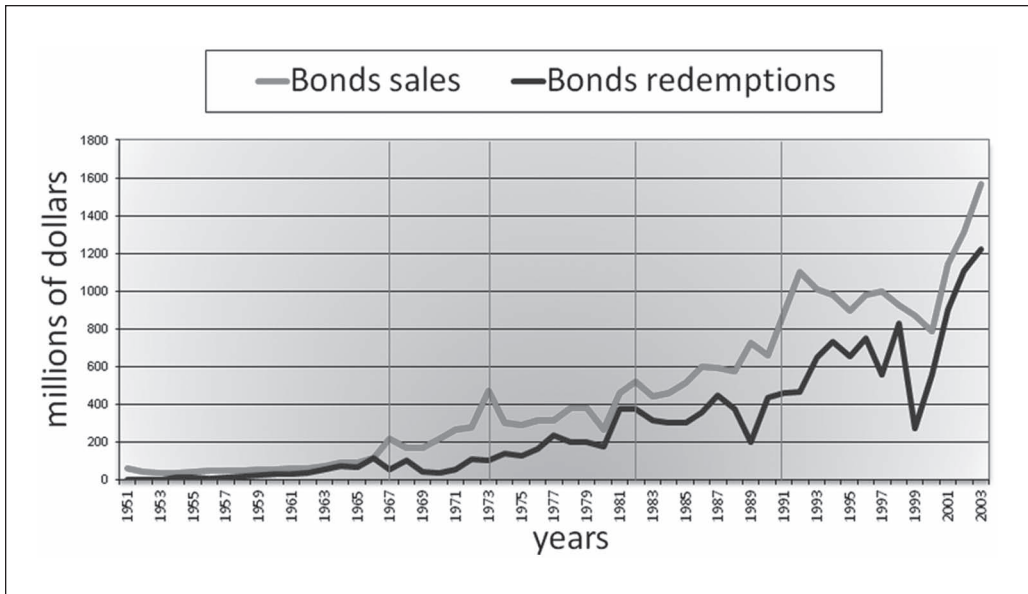
The people of Ireland, in authorizing through their representatives the floating of a loan bound themselves to repay the loan at the closest opportunity. These funds are, therefore, their property to be used according to their representatives, [as] the Dail Eireann, shall direct [sic]. (*Irish Press*, December 25, 1920)

From McGarrity's perspective, the loan-like properties of the bond money were precisely what freed de Valera from the dictates of the FOIF. The combination of ethical and pecuniary elements in the bond certificate allowed different actors to interpret the bond certificates differently.

To assert their claims, both the FOIF and de Valera and his associates attempted to clarify the exact meaning of the bonds and of the rights associated with their purchase, but their claims did not correspond. Eventually, these arguments led to a severe conflict. In late 1920, hoping to supplant the FOIF, de Valera established a new organization, the American Association for the Recognition of the Irish Republic (AARIR). During the coming months, the FOIF and the AARIR fought fiercely. De Valera loyalists sabotaged meetings of the FOIF. The FOIF suffered a dramatic decline in membership. The AARIR used the bonds' money to recruit members and still failed to establish permanent branches. When, in mid-1921, the Irish Republicans prepared a second bond drive, they had difficulty recruiting skilled organizers around the country. De Valera hoped to raise \$20 million with the second bond drive, but it eventually brought in less than \$700,000 (Carroll 2002).

### *Extending the Israel Bonds Campaign*

As in the Irish case, interorganizational struggles over the Israeli bond did not subside once the sale began. During 1951 alone, UJA and Israel bonds committees organized retaliatory boycotts in New York City, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Los Angeles, Miami, Newark, Pittsburgh, and Washington, DC.<sup>27</sup>



**Figure 2.** Annual sales and redemptions of State of Israel bonds in millions of dollars (the vertical lines represent wars) (Rehavi and Weingarten 2004).

Israeli and American Jews, like their Irish and Irish-American counterparts, harbored different understandings of what the bonds were. For Jewish Americans, the Israeli bond was mostly a gift. This attitude can be gleaned from various sources, but perhaps the most convincing evidence comes from examining the sales and redemptions of Israeli bonds over the years (see Figure 2). Almost without exception, the sales of the bonds surged and redemptions declined in times of war. In sharp contrast with typical investors, Jewish Americans were not deterred by the uncertainty associated with wars but, instead, opted to become more deeply invested in Israel, to give Israel a gift, at these times.

Israeli leaders, in contrast, saw the bond mostly as a loan and enjoyed the independence and moral respectability associated with this type of transaction. Abba Eban, the Israeli Ambassador to the United States, for example, explained that “an atmosphere of equality and mutual respect is emanating from the very idea of the loan.”<sup>28</sup> Through the bonds, Israel became less of a beggar state, at least from Eban’s viewpoint.

Despite the difference in emphases, both sides recognized the twofold nature of the Israeli bonds. The vast majority of the subscribers remembered to redeem the bonds upon maturation (Ketkar and Ratha 2009). By the same token, Israeli dignitaries speaking at AFDCI sales events never failed to thank subscribers for their generosity. Both sides of the transaction emphasized those aspects that pleased them most, and yet they still recognized the bonds as both an investment and a gift.

It may be useful to think about the Israeli-Jewish American interaction as a type of prolonged flirtation. Iddo Tavory conceptualizes flirtation as a form of interaction that is suspended between nonsexualized and sexualized relations (2009; see also Simmel 1984). Flirtation, he explains, lasts as only as long as the two sides manage to avoid acts that would define their relations. During flirtation, the status of those involved is ambiguous. Asking one out, however, decidedly terminates the flirtation and moves the relationship to a different plane (dating or not-romantically-involved). During flirtation, the interactants refrain

from making their relations a matter of explicit discussion. Similarly, Jewish Americans and the Israeli government were cognizant of the multiple meanings of the Israeli bonds, but they refrained from fleshing out the exact meaning of their mutual engagement by drawing on past (gift-giving relations) and future (investment, perhaps) roles.

The slight mismatch in emphases was useful in ushering cooperation between the parties. After all, had Jewish Americans seen no difference, in terms of moral value, between the Israeli bonds and bonds issued by General Motors, for example, in all likelihood they would have avoided the risk associated with Israel and purchased *only* General Motors bonds. In contrast, the Israeli government attributed respectability to the bonds' dollars precisely because it saw them as investment money that was different from funds provided by the UJA. The incongruent interpretations of the bonds served to define the parties involved as certain types of beings (at least in their own eyes). The gift-like properties of the Israeli bonds helped subscribers to think of themselves as somehow connected with Israel, and the investment-like aspects of the same bonds allowed Israeli leaders to see themselves as independent and sovereign.

When the Israeli government decided in late 1953 to issue another series of bonds, it had at its disposal a well-established network of committees all over the country. The AFDCI launched its "Development Issue" drive in May of 1954, emphasizing, again, the pecuniary and moral value of this investment. Other bond drives followed, and the sale of Israeli bonds continues to this day. Over time, sales increased from about \$40-60 million in the 1950s to more than \$1.5 billion in 2003. About a third of Israel's \$30 billion in external debt is owed to Israel bond subscribers (Rehavi and Weingarten 2004).

The tumultuous histories of the Irish and Israeli bond campaigns illustrate the difficulties involved in the organization of moral transactions. In both cases, the impetus for the issue of these hybrid financial instruments was the need to overcome the limitations associated with conventional philanthropy. The ambiguous nature of the bonds, in both cases, generated a mismatch in interpretations and considerable tensions. Nevertheless, the outcomes of the drives could hardly be more different. The abrupt termination of the Irish bond drive and the ongoing sale of the Israeli bonds provide a striking indication of failure and success. The point is not merely that the Israeli government managed to raise more money than the Irish government, although that is obviously true, but that the Israeli bond project was better able to keep the tensions between the parties involved from spoiling the transaction.

## MORAL TRANSACTIONS AND THE PRODUCTION OF A ZONE OF INDETERMINACY

The contrasting outcomes of the Irish and Israeli bond projects provide an interesting puzzle. Both the Irish and Israeli bond projects induced some misunderstanding regarding the nature of the transaction, but whereas in the Irish case, the parties involved reduced the meaning of the transaction in a manner that proved damaging, in the Israeli case, the parties—while emphasizing different aspects of the transaction—were still able to cooperate.

In retrospect, it is easy to identify macro historical differences that may explain why the Irish bond project failed while the Israeli project succeeded. First, at the time of floatation, the *Dáil Éireann* was still struggling for international recognition. In contrast, the Israeli government controlled a territory and enjoyed international recognition. Second, the preexistence of a network of UJA activists, who had extensive experience with fundraising, made it more likely that the Jewish American community would be able to effectively support a project of this kind. Third, it may be argued that conditions for such an operation in the United States were better in 1951, especially after the Holocaust, in comparison with 1920,



when public sympathy was not well disposed toward an ethnic minority raising money for a government that was struggling against Great Britain, the United States' ally in recently concluded World War I. But these differences contribute little to understanding why, in one case, a mismatch in interpretation exacerbated a conflict to the breaking point whereas in the other, a similar divergence did not lead to a break and perhaps even stabilized the transaction. Understanding these outcomes requires a different kind of historical investigation, one that pays close attention to the process by which the Irish and Israeli governments constructed the bonds so as to fit the worlds of their potential subscribers.

The purchase of bond certificates by more than 300,000 subscribers in the first drive attests to the fact that Irish Americans cared about the Irish cause and, at least initially, had no qualms about the specifics of the transaction. But the architects of the bond certificate drive put this goodwill to a difficult test at both the organizational and the individual levels. At the organizational level, the design of the drive was highly unstable. To make way for it, de Valera asked and the FOIF leaders agreed to terminate the IVF drive, but then de Valera entrusted the organization of the bond drive with the ACII. The FOIF activists remained vital for the success of the bond drive but its leaders felt betrayed and suspected that the Irish president conspired to destroy them (Tansill 1957). This was the moment when the interpretation of the bond certificates became vitally important for both camps. Interpreting the bond certificates as a gift allowed Devoy to demand consideration in matters of national importance. De Valera, in contrast, reinterpreted the bond certificates as an investment in order to resist the FOIF's demands.

The Irish drive was also negatively affected by faults in the distribution of the bond certificates. During the drive, the ACII relied on thousands of volunteers all over the country. In order to make sure that local volunteers actually sent the money they collected to the headquarters in New York, the ACII provided local organizers with application forms and receipts only. Once the headquarters received the applications along with the money, it issued the bonds and mailed them to subscribers. The ACII leaders believed that this procedure would act as a self-correcting mechanism. Subscribers who were waiting for their certificate would put pressure on local organizers and urge them to promptly send the money to the headquarters.<sup>29</sup> In practice, this procedure created serious delays and failures in delivery. Staff at headquarters were overwhelmed by thousands of applications, some of them entirely illegible, and were not able to issue and deliver the bonds in a timely manner. In the meantime, subscribers grew impatient, some of them even felt cheated, and local organizers had to deal with accusations of fraud.<sup>30</sup> The gift-like properties of the bond certificates made things worse. Being accused of fraud over work performed without expectation of pay is doubly injurious.

The collapse of the Irish bond project illustrates the fragile nature of moral transactions. The meaning of the bond certificates, as well as the moral significance associated with them, was not a matter of the intentionality of the subscribers alone. Rather, the significance and moral valence of the bond certificates were byproducts of the interaction between the parties which continued beyond the initial decision to purchase the bonds (on morality in interaction, see Turowetz and Maynard 2010). The meanings of the bond certificates became realized and also modified through the interactions between all those involved in the relationships (this includes the subscribers, the local organizers, the ACII, and Irish republic but also those excluded from the exchange, the leaders of the FOIF). During the first issue, the ambiguous meaning of the bond certificates was not an obstacle for cooperation. Later on, the two sides moved to clarify the bond certificates' meaning and their disagreements intensified. What started off as an appealing moral transaction became over time a questionable endeavor that tarnished the reputation of those most involved.

The organization of the Israeli bond drive generated a different dynamic. First, in contrast with the Irish case, in the Israeli case, the UJA fundraising efforts continued alongside the bond campaign. The side-by-side operation of these two organizations helped make the case for the difference between the philanthropic donations and subscriptions to the Israel bonds. In addition, in order to continue their philanthropic fundraising, the Jewish Federations needed the cooperation of the Israeli government, which supplied them with moving speakers and a credible cause. This dependence forced the Federations to tone down their criticism and not to question, at least not in public, the precise nature of the Israeli bonds.

Second, like in the Irish case, handling the collection of funds and controlling the distribution of bonds presented a daunting challenge. The AFDCI, too, provided local organizers only application forms and receipts. But to expedite the subscription process, the AFDCI contracted with 18 district banks to issue the bonds directly, thereby avoiding possible bottlenecks. The AFDCI also purchased an insurance policy for lost monies. As a result, fewer subscribers and organizers felt cheated.<sup>31</sup>

In both the Irish and Israeli cases, the fusion of elements of gift giving and market exchange generated discrepant interpretations and significant tensions. The difference between the cases lies in how the Irish and Israeli organizations handled these mismatched interpretations. Given the shaky political and economic status of the Irish and Israeli governments, a key challenge for the respective bond organizations lay in persuading subscribers that the bonds were anything other than a gift in disguise. But the Irish and Israeli bonds were differently qualified to accomplish this task. The sole difference between the Irish bond certificates and a regular gift was a conditional promise of repayment. Prior to their redemption, treating these bonds as an investment was essentially an act of good faith. In contrast, the special privileges built into the Israeli bonds provided subscribers with tangible evidence that they were different from the donations solicited by the UJA. The privileges incorporated into the bonds did not persuade subscribers that the bonds were a typical investment but they did make it more difficult for anyone to equate the bonds with a simple gift.

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that the Israeli bond project succeeded simply because it was somehow more ambiguous or more investment-like in comparison with the Irish bond certificate. Both bonds generated discrepant interpretations and there is no reason to believe that more businesslike propositions are somehow better able to contain the tensions arising from these divergences. We must also account for differences in the transactional contexts within which these tensions unfolded. In the Israeli case, the combination of the terms of the bonds along with the interorganizational arrangement of the relationship between the parties combined to create a zone of indeterminacy in which neither of the parties was particularly well equipped or motivated to clarify the nature of the bonds or the relationships that prevailed between the parties. The leaders of the Jewish Federations were not thrilled about the bonds, but the ongoing operational requirements of the UJA (namely, staying on good terms with the Israeli government) motivated them not to question the presentation of the bonds as a moral investment. In the Irish case, in contrast, a number of organizational glitches and unfortunate decisions motivated the FOIF and the Irish Republicans to interpret the bonds differently and forced these differences to the surface.

The temporal organization of the transaction in the Israeli case played an important role in the construction of this zone of indeterminacy. In the time gap between subscription and maturation, each party could tell itself a pleasing story about the nature of the transaction. Thus, the combination of the ambiguity that was built into the terms of the bonds together with the context in which they were issued allowed the Israel bond to become a moral transaction. Temporality also played a key role in the collapse of the Irish bond project. In an

atmosphere of mutual suspicion, every delay in the delivery of the bond certificates was interpreted as a sign of corruption. Furthermore, de Valera's use of the bond certificate proceeds in the United States gave the FOIF leaders an opportunity to assert their own interpretation of the bonds' meaning. The organization of the Irish bond campaign, in other words, did not permit the maintenance of a zone of indeterminacy. Interpretations hardened, divisions were clarified, lines were drawn, and further transactions between the parties stalled.

## DISCUSSION

This article examines the practical difficulties involved in organizing moral transactions. It demonstrates that the combination of elements of gift giving and market exchange complicates the negotiation of the rights and obligations that follow from such transactions. Successful orchestration of moral transaction necessitates creating a zone of indeterminacy within which parties can engage in exchange without having to clarify their rights and obligations.

Most theoretical and empirical analyses of economic transactions focus on individual actors or small groups. The Irish and Israeli bond cases, in contrast, involved large-scale organizations. One may argue against using concepts developed to analyze micro-level interactions to understand large-scale transactions. However, the actions taken by the actors in both the Irish and the Israeli cases—the decision to issue diaspora bonds, the resistance to these projects, and the interactions that unfolded over time—were deeply informed by the actors' interpretations of the rights and obligations they associated with gift giving and market exchange. There was no unbridgeable break separating the dynamics of gift giving and market exchange and the “bigger” processes that informed the organizations involved. Therefore, drawing sharp analytical lines between micro- and macro-level processes, in this case, would violate the integrity of the cases and impoverish the analysis.

More generally, as argued before, moral transactions often involve intermediary organizations and processes that extend beyond immediate interpersonal interaction, and therefore our analytical toolkit should extend accordingly. This can be illustrated by examining seemingly smaller transactions in which the fusion of ethical and pecuniary motivations is less obvious. Gretchen Herrmann, for example, shows how actors construe garage sales in the United States as more or less gift-like or commodity-like (1997, 2003). While the moral component of garage sales is not always explicit, it nonetheless comes up in conversation with sellers. Sellers assign prices to different items, but they often take account of the circumstances of shoppers and give special discounts, which they present as “half gift,” to buyers who display need. Buyers, on the other hand, often simply look for a bargain. These discrepant interpretations generate “uneasy tension and uncertainty about rules of behavior” (Herrmann 1997:915, 2003).

Remarkably, the parties in garage sales typically manage to complete their transaction and do so without having to decide whether it entails gift giving or market exchange. Herrmann's analysis focuses on the norms that govern interaction, but there is more to it than that. The key factor that allows such transactions to be completed, I suggest, is not simply the agreeable disposition of the parties but rather their ability to maintain a zone of indeterminacy—not to clarify the precise meanings of the exchange or the exact value of the objects that change hands. This becomes possible because of two key features of garage sales. First, calculating the value of items in garage sales is particularly hard due to their eclectic nature and because of the difficulty in assessing the depreciation in their value due to previous use. Thus, although the items are offered for sale, the organization of garage sales deprives the parties of calculation devices (Callon and Muniesa 2005) that can turn the transaction into a more market-like exchange. Second, unlike the sale of commodities in

regular market exchange, garage sales entail a recommodification of personal possessions. The items that are sold in a garage sale have already been bought for another purpose and used. From the seller's viewpoint, therefore, every dollar gained in the sale is income. This factor affords unusual flexibility in terms of pricing. In short, the organized features of garage sales and the temporal histories of the items that are being sold allow the seller and the buyer to maintain a zone of indeterminacy that facilitates the transaction's completion.

The cases examined here allow us to generalize about the conditions that facilitate the creation of moral transactions. First, as already mentioned, moral transactions often involve temporal delays of one sort or another. Instantaneous transactions may make it harder for the actors to hold onto differing interpretations of the transactions without these differences becoming immediately apparent. Second, moral transactions quite often involve more than two sides. Diaspora bonds, fair-trade coffee, and socially responsible investments attest to this point, but there is an underlying logic beyond this regularity. Elaborate organizational structures create social distance and open a space for mediation between seller and buyer that can be conducive to the maintenance of a zone of indecision.<sup>32</sup> Third, while moral transactions can be economically important, the resources involved in moral transactions tend to be inconsequential for at least one of the parties to the exchange. This aspect is related to the motivations of the actors involved in the transactions. When the sums involved are negligible, actors are less likely to insist on clarifying the terms and conditions. This, of course, does not mean that moral transactions are, by definition, ineffective, but it suggests an upper limit to what can be accomplished through them.

The concept of a zone of indeterminacy contributes to an ongoing discussion about the problem of cooperation without consensus. In this regard, Susan Leigh Star and James Griesemer highlight the importance of boundary objects in the formation of cooperation in science. Boundary objects are "objects which are both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites" (1989:393). Instead of imposing a consensus, the interpretive flexibility associated with boundary objects enables diverse groups to share knowledge and cooperate even while they hold onto their distinct worldviews.<sup>33</sup> Likewise, Peter Galison suggests that the subcultures of post-World War II physics—theoreticians, experimentalists, instrument builders—were able to cooperate by establishing local pidgin—limited shared vocabularies geared to accomplish specific tasks (1997). At the global level, researchers in these various subcultures had radically different interpretations of basic terms like mass, energy, and electron, but at the trading zone of the laboratory they were able to work together and establish shared local procedures for the conduct of experiments and even the interpretation of evidence. Whereas Star and Griesemer emphasize incomplete translation of meanings across contexts, Galison points to the creation of simplified vocabularies that do not eliminate differences in perspectives but allow for pragmatic cooperation.

John Padgett and Christopher Ansell's work on the rise to power of the Medici family in Renaissance Florence offers a third possibility (1993). Cosimo, the head of the Medici party, was an odd leader—he rarely spoke in public, and his responses to pleas were typically equivocal. Yet, when needed, he was able to muster firm support from elite families. The key to understanding Cosimo's influence, Padgett and Ansell suggest, rests in the structural position of the Medici family. Because of historical circumstances that need not concern us here, the Medici family adopted a marriage and patronage formation strategy that cut through existing social cleavages. As a consequence, it became impossible to pinpoint the Medici's particular interests, and Cosimo became the focal point of the multiple and often contradictory interests. In other words, the Medici's structural position allowed Cosimo to pursue "robust action," that is, it permitted him to flexibly take advantage of emerging opportunities without ever committing to any specific goal.

Common to these various strands of thought is a move beyond the almost axiomatic emphasis these days on taken-for-granted shared cognitive schemas and an appreciation of the importance of pragmatic, flexible, context-specific compromises (see Stark 2009). Interpretive flexibility and even ambiguity emerge from these accounts not as obstacles but, instead, as a kind of lubricant that facilitates cooperation amid differences and disagreements. When it comes to analyzing the nature of this interpretive flexibility and its sources, however, these accounts are quite different. The concepts of boundary object and robust action highlight differences in interpretation across contexts. Borrowing from Glaser and Strauss (1964), these concepts suggest that actors operate in a closed awareness context wherein the actors are not cognizant of the others' perspective. Galison's trading zones, in contrast, suggest operation in an open awareness context in which each subgroup understands the other, at least at the local level. The concept of a zone of indeterminacy is more flexible and can accommodate change in the context of awareness over time. In the period examined here, the actors involved in issue and purchase of the Israeli bonds operated in pretense awareness context, a variant of open awareness context wherein actors are aware of the difference in perspectives but pretend not to be aware of it, for the time being and for the sake of cooperation. But as Glaser and Strauss note, awareness contexts are not easy to maintain and they shift over time. The key point, which in principle may be accomplished in various awareness contexts, is that in order to smooth over disagreements, the zone of indeterminacy must reduce the ability and motivation to clarify the precise meaning of a given transaction and the rights and obligations that follow from it.

Furthermore, while these various concepts highlight the productive role of ambiguity, they offer radically different answers to the question of where ambiguity comes from. The concept of boundary objects highlights the multivocal character of particular objects. Calling attention to the role of nonhuman objects in social organization is an important contribution (Latour 2005). Sometimes, however, researchers ignore the context within which the object is embedded and treat boundary objects as the cause of successful cooperation (see Zeiss and Groegenwegen 2009; Star 2010). Padgett and Ansell, in contrast, focus almost exclusively on the context within which the Medici family was nestled. Although they mention Cosimo's sphinxlike behavior, his "Rorschach blot identity" is, for Padgett and Ansell, but a consequence of his structural position, not his behavior. In this sense, both concepts are reductionist. The concept of zone of indeterminacy, in contrast, draws attention to the struggles over the meaning of particular transactions and the material qualification of the objects that change hands. It allows us to think of ambiguous entities (human or nonhuman) and the context within which they are nested as mutually constitutive parts of an interactional whole.

Finally, this article points to a problematic lacunae at the heart of economic sociology. Much of the economic sociology agenda since Mark Granovetter's "Economic Action and Social Structure" (1985) focuses on showing how the "social" and the "economic" spheres intermesh and depend on each other. Even if not explicitly conceptualized in that way, this line of analysis shows that real-world transactions typically fuse elements of gift giving and market exchange (where the thing "gifted" is often trust). But this literature takes the market model as a default (Zelizer 2012) and largely overlooks the problem of how actors negotiate and determine the nature of their mutual engagement. This may not always be a problem. In some cases, when clarification practices are deeply institutionalized all actors indeed agree on the meaning of the exchange. But our understanding of a good number of transactions would be improved by taking into account the generally blurry nature of exchange and attending to how actors handle ambiguity. Credit provides a good illustration of the point. Economic sociologists typically treat credit as an instance of market exchange and add the category of "informal credit" to account for obvious differences between some types of loans and more



businesslike credit transactions. In these accounts, however, informal credit remains a residual category that cannot be fully absorbed by the theory (without bringing trust in as a *deus ex machina*).<sup>34</sup> Closely examining the process through which actors determine whether they are involved in market exchange, gift giving, or some other type of transaction altogether, and then exploring how they generate valuations of these transactions and agree on these valuations, would result in a better understanding of an important range of economic activities.

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## NOTES

1. This article does not address the question of whether the fusion of pecuniary and moral motivations is effective or desirable (for a critique of this fusion, see Nickel and Eikenberry 2009).
2. Stephen Vaisey's dual-process model of action suggests that morality can serve as an after-the-fact justification, as a deep-seated and emotionally charged cause of action, or as both (2009). The suggestion that actors may engage in moral transaction in order to "show their true color" is consistent with this understanding.
3. Alternatively, reducing such a transaction to a simple gift would prevent the investor from enjoying a return for his investment.
4. Diaspora bonds are an obvious outlier in conventional financial markets, but moral transactions are not altogether exceptional events in this context (see, for example, Nina Bandlej's work on foreign direct investment [2002, 2008] and Jared Peifer's work on socially responsible investing [2011]).
5. This generalization should not be overstated. Marcel Mauss' work, for one, was designed as a critique of post-World War I international debt politics (see Mallard 2011; also Dillon 2003). Likewise, thinking about market exchange in terms of face-to-face interaction is far too limiting (Knorr Cetina 2009).
6. For a balanced assessment of Bourdieu's contribution to gift theory and its place in his *oeuvre*, see Silber (2009).
7. The burgeoning literature on performativity shows how economists develop tools that allow actors to act increasingly like the *homo economicus* of economics textbooks (MacKenzie and Millo 2003). Kieran Healy's work on human organ exchange shows similar dynamics in the gift economy (2006).
8. Barry Schwartz observes that gift giving surrenders intimate information, which may be risky. The giver always reveals something about herself—her intentions toward the receiver, her taste, her means, and so on. In addition, she surrenders her own perception of the receiver—what she believes that his needs, taste, and means are (1967). An inappropriate gift, therefore, is potentially damaging for both the giver and the receiver. The possibility of a gift mistaken as a commodity multiplies these risks.
9. Nick Llewellyn's work considers these problems from a conversational analysis standpoint. Llewellyn details the minute interactional practices through which actors constitute an exchange as a "treat," a "donation," or an instance of reciprocity (2011a, 2011b). Llewellyn's analysis is illuminating but, true to the principles of conversational analysis, he pays little attention to the organizational work that *transcends* the immediate order of interaction.
10. Nurit Bird-David and Asaf Darr and develop the concept of "mass gift" to account for this kind of transaction (2009). However, sellers and buyers, while haggling creatively, typically treat such offers as nothing more than a marketing device and approach it as an instance of market exchange.
11. Eric Leifer's work on reciprocity is consistent with my approach (1988). In his account, actors reciprocate in order to maintain ambiguity regarding their social roles.
12. A zone of indeterminacy can be the outcome of intended strategy, an unintended consequence, or the half-willed product of pragmatic problem solving. Importantly, the construction of a zone of indeterminacy involves, by definition, more than one actor, and therefore a combination of these possibilities is likely.

13. Economic sociologists usually treat credit as an instance of market exchange and distinguish between formal and informal loans (Carruthers 2005; Guseva and Rona-Tas 2001). The framework developed here captures this distinction and anchors it in a well-developed theoretical discussion.
14. At maturation, the conditions for the preservation of this zone of indeterminacy change. A failure to repay may force the creditor to clarify that the loan was not a gift or vice versa.
15. Data for this study are based on extensive archival research in the American Irish Historical Society (AIHS), the American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS), and the New York Public Library (NYPL) in New York; Ben Gurion Archives (BGA), the Central Zionist Archives (CZA), and the Israeli Government Archives (IGA) in Israel; and the Irish National Archives (INA), the Irish National Library (INL), and the University College Dublin Archive (UCDA) in Dublin. Parts of these materials were presented in a previous publication (Lainer-Vos 2012). Here I reconceptualize the data and treat much previously unanalyzed archival records. My analysis is influenced by actor-network theory (see Latour 2005). I focus on the practical difficulties and controversies associated with organizing moral transactions and the innovations introduced in order to overcome them. The comparison of the cases is inspired by Jeffery Haydu's work on reiterated problem solving (1998). Instead of a priori identifying a list of important variables, I treat the Irish and Israeli cases as instances of pragmatic problem solving and examine how key actors went about overcoming more or less similar difficulties.
16. See American Bank Note company to McGarrity, December 12, 1919, INL/McGarrity Papers/MS.17522(1).
17. Nunan to Collins, September 17, 1919, INA/DE 2/292.
18. De Valera to Walsh, September 19, 1919, NYPL/Walsh papers/28; see also UCDA/de Valera papers/P150/962.
19. *The Nation*, Volume 110, No. 2851, undated, AIHS/Cohalan papers/1/9.
20. See "Summary of CJFWF Participation in Jerusalem Meetings, September 3-6, 1950, to Consider Israel's Economic Needs and American Jewry's Responsibilities by Stanley C. Myers." CZA/A371/28.
21. See "Notes on the Republic of Israel Loan," October 31, 1951, CZA/A371/2.
22. See "Memorandum of meeting with partners of Kuhn Loeb, December 4, 1950, CZA/A371/2.
23. Fiscal Agency Agreement, May 1, 1951, AJHS/AFDCI/I-322/5.
24. Fiscal Agency Agreement, May 1, 1951, AJHS/AFDCI/I-322/5.
25. "Israel Exposition," undated booklet, IGA/Foreign Affairs/2420/13.
26. See also Lynch to members of the FOIF, June 17, 1920 (AIHS/Cohalan papers/5/5).
27. See CZA/A371/10; CZA/Z6/582.
28. Eban to Sharett, June 30, 1952, IGA/Foreign Affairs/2420/12.
29. O'Mara to Collins, November 5, 1920, INA/DE5/57/14.
30. Dunne to Lynch, April 8, 1920, NYPL/Maloney collection/4/5.
31. AJHS/AFDCI/I-322/1/10; Sanders to Keller, May 15, 1952; Kurash to Montor, May 23, 1952 CZA/A371/9.
32. The producers of fair-trade coffee may not perceive themselves as beneficiaries of well-wishing customers. This mismatch in interpretation may not become an object of contention simply *because* they practically never meet. The negotiation over the rights and obligations associated with this moral transaction happens elsewhere.
33. Yuval Millo and Donald Mackenzie's (2009) analysis of the spread of financial risk management tools demonstrates the usefulness of the term for economic sociologists.
34. Marcel Mauss does the same in reverse by treating credit as a special type of gift.

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# Copresence: Revisiting a Building Block for Social Interaction Theories

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## Abstract

Copresence, the idea that the presence of other actors shapes individual behavior, links macro- and micro-theorizing about social interaction. Traditionally, scholars have focused on the physical proximity of other people, assuming copresence to be a given, objective condition. However, recent empirical evidence on technologically mediated (e.g., e-mail), imaginary (e.g., prayer), and parasocial (e.g., watching a television show) interactions challenges classic copresence assumptions. In this article we reconceptualize copresence to provide theoretical building blocks (definitions, assumptions, and propositions) for a revitalized research program that allows for the explicit assessment of copresence as an endogenous, subjective variable dynamically related to social context. We treat copresence as the degree to which an actor perceives mutual entrainment (i.e., synchronization of attention, emotion, and behavior) with another actor. We demonstrate the ramifications of this reconceptualization for classic theorizing on micro-macro linkages and contemporary research questions, including methodological artifacts in laboratory research and disparities in patient-provider rapport.

## Keywords

social psychology, theory construction, communication, technology

The study of social interaction traces its roots to Triplett's (1898) research on how individual action is influenced by the contemporaneous physical presence of others or, to use Goffman's (1966) term, copresence. Early investigators of interaction built on this original understanding of copresence (e.g., Bandura, Ross, and Ross 1963; Goffman 1966; Zajonc 1965). Over the next 40 years, researchers worked to specify the outcomes of copresence at the micro-level for individuals and its relationship to macrostructures.

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Yet the physical presence of other actors is neither necessary nor sufficient for copresence. Recent studies indicate that dynamics of direct human-human interaction in a shared physical space are also present in computer-mediated communication (CMC) with a human or computer-controlled agent (McCall and Blascovich 2009; Sivunen and Hakonen 2011), imaginary conversations with human and nonhuman entities (Cerulo 2009, 2011; Sharp 2012), and parasocial interactions with media personalities (Giles 2002). Rather than suggest that these interactions require separate and isolated theories from those about physically collocated humans, we view this as an opportunity to refine existing theories and frameworks (for an example of a similar approach, see Walther, Gay, and Hancock 2005) and take a fresh look at long-standing, taken-for-granted notions of situated interaction. Unifying these forms of interaction offers the additional benefit of helping us understand the range of encounters that may take place in a single setting, such as the trading floor of a foreign exchange market (Knorr Cetina and Bruegger 2002), where interactions occur through different modalities (e.g., face to face and computer mediated).

In light of the challenges raised by this recent research, we reconceptualize copresence. We contend that copresence is distinguished by its subjective nature that, in turn, frames experiences of objective situations. Copresence is the *perception* of mutual entrainment between actors, where entrainment is the mutual synchronization of three components: attention, emotion, and behavior. Additionally, where most sociological treatments of copresence view it as a binary variable (people are copresent or not), we conceptualize copresence as a continuous, intraindividual variable. We follow Cerulo's (2009) lead in emphasizing perceptions to encapsulate broader forms of social interaction and use this to build on previous theorizing on the importance of social context (e.g., Marshall 2002; Zhao and Elesh 2008).

We outline a sociological research program for copresence that includes a formal definition of its properties and a set of propositions for future empirical inquiry. We highlight four core features of copresence: (1) its subjectivity, (2) its variability for each actor within an interaction, (3) its responsiveness to contextual factors, and (4) its influence on interactional outcomes. Our definition emphasizes two measurable dimensions: (1) one's entrainment with others and (2) one's belief that others are mutually entrained with oneself. Both dimensions are necessary for explicitly capturing copresence and to formally develop propositions that anchor the concept in established research literatures. We propose that situational factors influence the first dimension of copresence (our perceived entrainment with another) and assume this occurs prior to the second dimension (the subjective perception that the other is entrained with us). We focus on this second dimension as driving interactional outcomes through a variety of well-established interactional processes.

After a brief review of prior literature on copresence and the presentation of a formal model, we offer assumptions and eight propositions that anchor copresence in topics important to scholars studying social interaction: nonverbal cues, schemas, status, social identity, helping behavior, persuasion, social judgments, and attachment. The first four topics show how context influences our entrainment with another; the last four demonstrate outcomes of perceiving another's entrainment with us. For each proposition, we draw on multiple literatures—from sociology, psychology, and communication—to outline how all three components of entrainment—attention, emotion, and behavior—are implicated. These eight modular propositions can be used to generate theory and testable hypotheses. We conclude by applying these propositions to show how an improved understanding of copresence can inform theorizing in two illustrative research areas: protocol differences in laboratory experiments and disparities in physician-patient rapport.

## BACKGROUND

Copresence is firmly positioned within social theory as the medium through which micro-macro influences are accomplished. Simmel (1908), for example, doubted macro-sociological approaches that ignored or downplayed the importance of patterned social interaction. More recently, Giddens (1984) posited that structures exist insofar as they are enacted on the micro-level. Having actors collocated is thus necessary for the process by which situated social interaction (re)produces larger social systems; there is no wider structure without corporeal human beings interacting. Copresence is also a core aspect of Collins's (2004) theory of interaction ritual chains, which posits a system in which social actors increase or replenish personal stores of "emotional energy" through satisfying interaction rituals (following Goffman's use of the term). Feelings of solidarity, increases in emotional energy, creation of symbols, and feelings of morality all stem from interaction rituals, which require "mutual focus of attention [as] a crucial ingredient" (Collins 2004:50). Martin (2009) sums up these micro-macro influences as follows: "Social structure is here considered to refer to recurring patterns of social interaction, where the patterning is in regards to concrete individuals (and not roles or classes)" (p. 9).

Because many of these ideas were developed prior to the contemporary advent of CMC and the corpus of research on imaginary and parasocial interaction, copresence is here conflated with sharing the same physical space. In reconceptualizing copresence, we focus on perceptions to analytically separate the two. We contend that individual perceptions are crucial for understanding copresence. This idea is hinted at in Mead's (1913) early work on how conscious experience of exchanging gestures with others lays the groundwork for an individual's notion of subjective copresence, although little subsequent work traces back to this perspective (but see Couch 1989). Similarly, Cooley (1902) pointed out that the collocation of actors in a physical space is not enough to affect social outcomes:

It is important to face the question of persons who have no corporeal reality, as for instance the dead, characters of fiction or drama, ideas of the gods and the like. Are these real people, members of society? I should say that in so far as we imagine them they are. . . . On the other hand, a corporeally existent person is not socially real unless [he or she] is imagined. (p. 122)

Much later, Giddens (1991) pointed out that sharing the same physical space is not sufficient: "a person may be on the telephone to someone twelve thousand miles away and for the duration of the conversation be more closely bound up with the responses of that distant individual than with others sitting in the same room" (p. 189). That two people are in close proximity to one another can make copresence latent, but it is the *perception* of one another that renders copresence manifest for individuals.

These works suggest our notion of subjective copresence, but they say little about the endogeneity of copresence in social context. Goffman (1959) noted that copresence and a complementary concept, privacy, are constrained by status orders. More recently, Marshall (2002) situated copresence in social context (listing antecedents to and consequences of copresence) in his explanation of how belief and belonging emerge from ritual practice. Both Goffman (1966) and Marshall, however, implicitly equated copresence with sharing the same physical space. Integrating their ideas on social context with the importance of perception suggests that basic understandings of social interaction can be decoupled from physical collocation (see Zhao and Elesh 2008), creating an opening for a revised conceptualization of copresence.

## AN UPDATED CONCEPTUALIZATION OF COPRESENCE

Our primary goals for revisiting copresence are to increase its empirical and theoretical relevancy, build bridges with recent discoveries regarding interaction, and align a theoretical understanding of copresence with the fundamental idea that intraindividual processes are linked to social context. The first step in linking copresence to other concepts is to define it. Goffman (1966) offers the classic definition of copresence on the basis of sharing physical space. Copresence stems from

two distinctive features of face-to-face interaction: richness of information flow and facilitation of feedback . . . persons must sense that they are close enough to be perceived in whatever they are doing, including their experiencing of others, and close enough to be perceived in this sensing of being perceived. (p. 17)

We extract two separate dimensions of copresence from Goffman's definition: (1) one's entrainment toward others and (2) one's belief that others are reciprocally entrained.

*Definition:* Copresence is the degree to which one actor (1) perceives entrainment with a second actor and (2) sees the second actor reciprocating entrainment, where entrainment is a linear function of the synchronization of mutual attention, emotion, and behavior.<sup>1</sup>

We highlight a number of features in this definition. The word *degree* denotes that copresence is a continuous variable, with an actor more or less experiencing copresence. This aspect parallels Mead's (1913) and Goffman's (1966) observations that people can be more or less involved in a conversation. This continuum is also similar to Zerubavel's (1979) proposal for analyzing degrees of social accessibility and distinctions between private and public time:

The situation of being alone with one's spouse, for example, is obviously less public than that of being at a formal reception, and yet it is by no means totally private. Therefore, privacy and publicity ought to be viewed as the ideal-typical polarities of a continuum, rather than a conceptual dichotomy. (p. 39)

We dedicate a good portion of this article to the ramifications of fluctuating copresence.

A second feature of our definition is that copresence is a perception. This part of the definition captures the human capacity to experience fluctuations in entrainment, such as increasing or decreasing attention to stimuli (Pashler 1998). Focusing on perceptions links the definition with Cooley's (1902) claim that physical collocation is neither necessary nor sufficient for social outcomes, and it falls in line with contemporary observations that perceptions matter for social interaction.

A third feature of our definition, taken from Goffman (1966), is the inclusion of two separate dimensions of copresence: entrainment toward another and reflected entrainment. Interaction partners mutually adapt as time progresses, synchronizing voice frequencies (Gregory 1983), interpersonal distance (Hall 1966), and body movements to a speaker's speech (Condon and Sander 1974). Along similar lines, research shows that the inability of some forms of CMC to support synchronous interaction (e.g., e-mail) produces low levels of copresence among users (Nowak, Watt, and Walther 2009).

A fourth feature of our definition is that each dimension of copresence contains three components that actors synchronize: attention, emotion, and behavior. Mutual attention is

impossible to separate from the emotions and behavior created during the interaction (Reddy 2005). Ritual theory considers physical copresence, mutual attention, and common mood to be the basis of interaction rituals, from which rhythmic activity stems (Summers-Effler 2006). Although we subsume mutual attention, mood, and behavior as elements of copresence, our definition is not incompatible with this view. Both treatments allow these components to occur simultaneously, or not. Our definition, however, captures the common observation in psychology (the field in which our three proposed components of copresence are typically studied) that these components are intimately intertwined for evolutionary reasons (Lakin et al. 2003). For simplicity, we treat copresence as a linear function of the three components; increases in any component result in equal increments of one's sense of "being with another."

Next, we take up the three components of copresence: mutual attention, emotion, and behavior. All three can be automatic or intentional, suggesting that copresence, too, can be either automatic or intentional. This parallels current psychological consensus that the human mind follows a dual-process model that operates through these two levels of information processing (for a recent review, see Evans 2008). The automatic system is defined by fast, unintentional, and effortless processing; it eases cognitive processing (Bargh 1997) but can distort incoming information to fit preconceptions and is poor at responding to novel information. The conscious system controls a smaller part of our mind and is more flexible but less efficient. The dual-process model has been useful for informing sociological perspectives (e.g., Hitlin 2008; Vaisey 2009). Returning to our formulation of a continuum of copresence, the lower end corresponds to automatic processing and is evidenced by sudden, uncontrollable electrodermal activity when others draw near (McBride, King, and James 1965). The higher end of the copresence continuum is under conscious control, such as making intentional efforts to ensure copresence between oneself and a partner.

### *Mutual Attention*

This component refers to a situation in which two actors are reciprocally focused on one another. It is different from joint attention, which refers to a situation in which two actors focus their attention on a third object. Mutual attention is not directly interchangeable with attention, because attention captures only a one-directional focus on another object or person. Cognitive psychologists have called for more direct examinations of mutual attention (e.g., Reddy 2005); our focus on it here can serve as a bridge for interdisciplinary linkages.

### *Mutual Emotion*

Here, we refer to empathy and its more automatic form, emotional contagion (Neumann and Strack 2000). To have empathy with another person means one shares that person's emotion. It is distinct from sympathy, which refers to knowing about another's plight and wanting to alleviate it. In emotional contagion, mutual emotion occurs without the focal actor's conscious awareness, likely through nonconscious mimicry of another's facial expressions that eventually leads one to experience the same emotion (Hatfield, Cacioppo, and Rapson 1994).

### *Mutual Behavior*

We focus on mutual "motor activity," commonly described in the literature as a manifestation of the chameleon effect (Chartrand and Bargh 1999), which is separate from behaviors that signal mutual emotion (e.g., facial expressions). Like the other three components, an



actor's motor mimicry of another actor can be automatic or intentional (Lakin et al. 2003). As with emotional contagion, research shows that the mere perception of another's behavior primes that behavior in our minds and increases the likelihood of engaging in it (Chartrand and Bargh 1999).

## COPRESENCE MODEL

For simplicity, we begin our formalization with a setting containing two actors, a focal person (P) and one other person (O). We refer to P's perception of her own entrainment toward O as PEO (P's entrainment with O). This can be analytically separated from P's subjective belief that O is entrained with P, which we label P(OEP). PEO and P(OEP) need not be equal, and in practice, quite likely differ during an interaction. If P is high status and O is low status, for example, PEO may be low and P(OEP) may be high (later, we explain why status might organize these dimensions).

Simplified models have advantages, as in the "minimal actor" approach (Lawler, Ridgeway, and Markovsky 1993), and allow for simple expansion. For example, we might treat physical copresence as that between P and O from the view of a third actor, Q. We can also switch the analytical focus to O's perspective and derive two mirror perceptions: OEP (O's entrainment with P) and O(PEO) (O's perception of the extent to which P is entrained with O). Comparing P(OEP) to OEP has the added utility of capturing what Berger and Luckmann (1967) call intersubjectivity, or shared reality, and may remedy the paucity of sociological understanding of the concept (see Reich 2010).

Because both PEO and P(OEP) are perceptions, each has its own continuum, which we described earlier. Neither dimension by itself is sufficient for copresence; if either PEO or P(OEP) is zero, there is no copresence. We might even use the model to describe privacy as the absence of copresence: P(OEP) is zero. Copresence for an actor (P) is heuristically the product of PEO and P(OEP). In other words, both PEO and P(OEP) are necessary for copresence; the absence of one or the other suggests that P feels (or actually is) alone.

We can imagine situations that correspond to different configurations of PEO and P(OEP). When one meets with a colleague to discuss research and each participant is building directly on the other's ideas, each actor has high PEO and P(OEP). Similarly, both PEO and P(OEP) tend to be high when exchanging text messages with a friend regarding the latest work gossip. At the opposite end, PEO and P(OEP) are both low, and perhaps even zero (no copresence), when we are objectively if not subjectively alone, such as sitting on a crowded bus, engulfed in a book, or when we purposefully turn off our cell phone to avoid contact with someone.

The flexibility of the model lies in the fact that O need not be another physically present human, or even a human at all. The model thus allows for the study of parasocial and imaginary interactions with nonhuman O's, such as prayer with deities or deceased ancestors. Because prayer is an intentional interaction into which P enters, PEO is a given and necessarily high. The same can be said of P(OEP), since (unlike other humans) targets of prayer are always available (Sharp 2010). Because both PEO and P(OEP) are a given and high on their respective continua, it makes little sense to use propositions about copresence, such as the ones we list here, to explain fluctuations in copresence during these interactions. Rather, we should study the circumstances in which such interactions are initiated and their outcomes.

Traditionally, the concept of role-taking would be most closely associated with our notion of copresence as an actor's intersubjective sense of another's perspective. And at first glance, role-taking may seem sufficient to carry the theoretical weight that we place onto

copresence. However, role-taking is an interactional process, substantively related to, but conceptually distinct from, copresence. Copresence involves interpreting the *direction* and *level of entrainment* with another, whereas role-taking focuses on interpretation of the *content* of the other's situated perspective. One might sense another's entrainment without considering the content of her perspective (e.g., when riding on a crowded bus attempting to keep to ourselves), and one might role-take without a sense of copresence (e.g., imagining what your mother might think). In the latter, we have no perceived entrainment with the actor, yet we contemplate her appraisal of us, as when we consider committing a delinquent act (Heimer and Matsueda 1994). In the former, low levels of copresence result in limited cognitive processing of others' situated perspectives.

## ASSUMPTIONS AND PROPOSITIONS

### *Assumptions*

A first step in developing a theoretical research program is providing simplifying assumptions to guide the development of propositions (Cohen 1989).

*Assumption 1:* PEO occurs chronologically before P(OEP).

Building on the idea we introduced earlier, our first assumption is that P's perception of O's entrainment with P is conditional on P attending to O in the first place, that is, P(OEP) is conditional on PEO. A similar assumption is stated in the literature on mutual attention (e.g., Reddy 2005). This suggests in turn that factors that shape copresence initially operate by influencing PEO. If we are sitting in a park and hear a strange voice yell out our name, we establish PEO (perhaps automatically [Broadbent 1958]) but not necessarily P(OEP). We must first decide if the voice belongs to someone who is directing her attention to us. If we decide the person is indeed yelling out to us and not to someone else who shares our first name, then we have established P(OEP) and now have some amount of copresence. Next, we attempt to interpret O's actions toward us, referred to as intentionality (Reddy 2005). Of course, interpretations are not always correct, as when we wave at someone who is waving in our direction, only to find out the person was actually waving at someone located just behind us. Perceived copresence in this situation quickly moves from positive to zero (often accompanied by a feeling of embarrassment).

*Assumption 2:* P's copresence potential is finite.

Here, we draw on an assumption from cognitive science that the human mind has finite cognitive capacity (Foddy and Kashima 2002). If P is fully focused on the immediate situation, like giving a lecture to a crowded room, the addition of one more O to that crowd will not increase P's general sense of copresence with the crowd. If an audience member asks a question, P will focus in on that O, raising the level of copresence with the questioner and lowering the generalized level with the rest of the room. Consequently, in interactions with more than one actor, copresence is distributed across Os, reducing the amount of entrainment applied to any one O unless one focuses in on a specific person to the exclusion of other interactants.<sup>2</sup>

We turn next to positioning copresence as a meaningful and important social phenomenon in a web of contextual antecedents and consequences. We base many of the propositions we develop on CMC research, home to the most explicit copresence work. Our propositions are

based on previous scholarship focused on the three components of copresence we identified. The review of the literature supporting each individual component is brief because of space considerations.

### *Contextual Forces on Copresence*

In this section, we develop propositions to explain how social context organizes PEO.<sup>3</sup> Because PEO comes causally before P(OEP) (assumption 1), each proposition posits factors that influence PEO.<sup>4</sup>

*Proposition 1:* PEO will decrease (increase) the more a situation constrains (facilitates) the exchange of cues that signal attention, emotion, and behavior.

Support for this proposition can be found within numerous perspectives, such as social presence theory (Short, Williams, and Christie 1976), the cuelessness model (Rutter 1987), and the reduced social cues approach (Sproull and Kiesler 1986). The unifying fact is that nonverbal cues emanating from the entire body are central to communicating (Argyle and Cook 1976), a relationship highlighted when they are obstructed in CMC. Moreover, a related concept, intersubjectivity, is likely best achieved in face-to-face interaction, which allows for the turn-taking necessary to achieve coordination of shared meaning (Reich 2010). We abstract from these ideas and contend that *any* situation that constrains or facilitates the exchange of cues will influence PEO. Being in separate offices can, of course, guard against cue exchange, but so too can schemas (DiMaggio 1997; Howard and Renfrow 2003) for expected behaviors. Norms also prescribe how to emote (and actually feel) during situations (Hochschild 1983), or when mutual attention is appropriate between long-term partners (Weiss 1991). Couples that share living spaces, for example, can develop norms about whether mutual attention or privacy is expected.

*Attention.* With respect to CMC, e-mail, video, and text messaging isolate communication channels differently and demonstrate the most basic influences of situational constraints on copresence. CMC highlights facets of copresence often overlooked in sociology, namely, that the exchange of symbols—whether verbal, paraverbal, or nonverbal—during social interactions that signal mutual attention between actors is variable (see also Menchik and Tian 2008). From this research tradition, we now understand that, *ceteris paribus*, greater copresence tends to exist in face-to-face exchanges than in those mediated by technologies where social cues are obstructed (Zhao 2003). Similarly, certain camera angles that simulate mutual gaze with a television personality strengthen an audience's parasocial relationship (Nordlund 1978).

*Emotion.* Visual cues from a partner's face, particularly cues originating in the eye region, are crucial for recognition of a partner's emotions. Some individuals constantly experience situations in which these cues are unavailable to their conscious awareness. For example, individuals with autism have difficulty identifying emotion in faces, particularly when shown only the eye region (Baron-Cohen, Wheelwright, and Jolliffe 1997). The lack of cues in CMC can make exchanges difficult and even lead to conflict (Walther 1992), which is why emoticons enhance intersubjectivity (Derks, Bos, and von Grumbkow 2007; Menchik and Tian 2008; Thompson and Foulger 1996). Moreover, use of these contextual supports in text-based communication increases the likelihood of emotional contagion (Cheshin and Rafaeli 2009).

*Behavior.* The most common form of CMC is text based (Derks, Fischer, and Bos 2008), which effectively blocks opportunities for the physical and rhythmic synchronicity Durkheim (1912) said was central to human interaction. That is not to say, however, that no

forms of behavioral synchronicity occur in these exchanges. Forms of linguistic matching, for instance, can be observed in text-based communication (Niederhoffer and Pennebaker 2002), but the correlates of this type of synchronicity differ slightly from those observed in face-to-face communication. Gonzales, Hancock, and Pennebaker (2010) found that linguistic matching correlated with group cohesion at an equal magnitude for face-to-face groups and those discussing via computer terminals, but there was a higher correlation between linguistic matching and task performance for groups interacting face to face.

Within immersive virtual environments (for a recent overview, see Campos-Castillo 2012), programmers can engineer situations that affect behavioral cues of entrainment. Computer-controlled avatars that mimicked research participants' head movements were rated as more realistic than agents that simply displayed movements of a prior participant (Bailenson, Swin, et al. 2004; Bailenson and Yee 2005).

*Proposition 2:* PEO will be positively related to P's cognitive capacity.

This proposition connects many classic findings in social cognition, providing us with a wealth of standardized methods (e.g., Srull 1984) for examining copresence. To decrease cognitive capacity, for example, experimentalists studying copresence may manipulate time constraints (e.g., De Dreu 2003; Dijker and Koomen 1996) or motivation to attend to particular features of the context (e.g., Klein and Hodges 2001).

*Attention.* Gazing directly at another tends to increase our cognitive load because cognitive resources are needed to monitor the rich information in faces (Glenberg 1997). Having to continuously gaze at another person during conversation, for example, increases speech hesitations (Beattie 1981). We often avert our gaze from another person to free cognitive resources and attend to other tasks. Young children, for example, tend to avert mutual gaze when asked difficult questions during conversation (Doherty-Sneddon and Phelps 2005). Similarly, adults who avert their gaze increase their memory accuracy (Glenberg, Schroeder, and Robertson 1998).

*Emotion.* One's degree of empathy with another person is related to committed cognitive resources (Hodges and Wegner 1997). Research participants who were asked to perform a cognitive rehearsal task were more likely to discount a target person's anxiety level compared with participants who were not performing the cognitive task (Gilbert, Pelham, and Krull 1988). In another study, participants were informed that their pay would be based on how well they assessed a target's feelings; this increased accuracy (due to motivated deployment of more cognitive resources) over that observed when pay for performance was not mentioned (Klein and Hodges 2001). Conversely, the more automatic form of empathy is less susceptible to the availability of cognitive resources (Hodges and Wegner 1997). In a set of studies, Neumann and Strack (2000) showed that research participants' moods spontaneously became congruent with the affect portrayed by a target person's voice, even when the participants performed a concurrent task during voice playback.

*Behavior.* Finally, manipulating cognitive resources can also influence the extent of behavioral mimicry. When researchers present participants with the goal to affiliate and establish attachment, their mimicry of their interaction partners' movements increases, even when the motivation is presented at the nonconscious level (Lakin and Chartrand 2003). In proposition 8, we present further evidence linking behavioral mimicry and attachment.

*Proposition 3:* PEO will decrease (increase) as P's status relative to O's increases (decreases).

We assume that copresence is a finite phenomenon (assumption 2), leading us to consider which factors organize the distribution of copresence when P is interacting with more than one O. "Choice of main focus of attention, choice of side-involvements and of intensity of involvement, become[s] hedged in with social constraints, so that some allocations of attention become socially proper and other allocations improper" (Goffman 1967:115). Here we focus on status, which is commonly used to organize nonverbal signals in task and collectively oriented groups (Ridgeway, Berger, and Smith 1985).

**Attention.** We suggest that signals connoting attention are organized by status. For example, group members may pay the most attention to the highest status actor, given that she is expected to perform the best (Berger et al. 1977). Moving down the status hierarchy, each actor earns less and less attention.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, empirical research on eye gaze among status-differentiated groups shows that high-status actors tend to look at low-status actors less when the low-status actors are speaking than the reverse (e.g., Dovidio et al. 1988). Moreover, beauty shapes status in groups (Webster and Driskell 1983), and audiences tend to prefer parasocial interaction with physically attractive media personalities (Rubin and McHugh 1987).

**Emotion.** Within the literature on emotion work (Hochschild 1983), we can identify patterns in which status organizes empathy. Status hierarchies guide the management of our own emotions, as well as interpersonal emotion management (Thoits 1996) in which we manage the emotion of others. With respect to the latter, economic dependence is positively related to interpersonal emotion management between spouses: the more dependent spouse manages the less dependent (Erickson 2005). Within organizations, low-status individuals are often charged with taking care of their superiors' emotions (Hochschild 1983; Pierce 1995). Concerning emotion management, we tend to seek out those who are "experts" in managing emotions in a particular situation. A particular deity, for example, may be selected for prayer on the basis of expertise in the task for which assistance in emotion management is needed (Cerulo and Barra 2008; Sharp 2010).

**Behavior.** One's relative status in a group influences the extent that one mimics another's behavior, at least for high self-monitors (Cheng and Chartrand 2003). Self-monitoring is the process by which individuals control their public images (Snyder 1974); high self-monitors are those who are most motivated to do so. Because mimicking another's behavior contributes to establishing attachment (proposition 8), high self-monitors are more likely than low self-monitors to (nonconsciously) use this relationship tool (Cheng and Chartrand 2003). Specifically, this research found that a high-self-monitoring participant's mimicry of a fellow group member's mannerisms (face touching) increased with the group member's relative status.

*Proposition 4:* PEO will be higher in situations in which P shares a salient social identity with O than when P does not.

Proposition 4 bridges copresence with research on social identities.<sup>6</sup> A social identity is our definition for a group or category in which we are members, relative to other groups or categories (Tajfel 1981). We suggest how these definitions shape copresence.

**Attention.** Given our limited cognitive capacity (assumption 2), we allocate differential attention to members of our social groups. Decades of social-psychological research demonstrates that ingroup members hold more influence over people's judgments, choices, and actions. One plausible contributing factor involves the attention component of copresence. We pay more attention to ingroup views over outgroup views, thereby aligning our attitudes with the ingroup (Haslam, McGarty, and Turner 1996). Under conditions of uncertainty (e.g., indecision regarding an upcoming computer purchase), we attend to messages provided by ingroup members to help make sense of ambiguity (Tajfel 1981).



Moreover, network ties to members of our social groups tend to be symmetric (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001). This is due partly to the fact that our social location shapes the opportunity for network contact (Marsden 1987), but another factor is that establishing and maintaining a network tie can be costly (Burt 1982). We may therefore streamline our search for resources (e.g., consultation and social support) and focus our attention on developing a tie within our social group.

**Emotion.** Along with being influenced by the ingroup's attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs, evidence suggests that we also adopt the ingroup's emotions. For example, according to intergroup emotions theory, individuals often conform to the emotions believed to be experienced by the ingroup and actually experience the same emotions (as opposed to simply outwardly displaying them) (Moons et al. 2009). We are also likely to feel greater empathy toward a member of the ingroup than a member of the outgroup (Stürmer et al. 2006). Our affective reactions to pleasant or unpleasant pictures of ingroup members are also more intense than those for outgroup members (Brown, Bradley, and Lang 2006). Finally, depressed emotion following the reading of an ingroup member's experience of prejudice is positively associated with the strength of identification with the ingroup (McCoy and Major 2003).

Not every emotion is automatically mimicked in every setting. Sad emotional displays tend to be mimicked less than happy ones, but shared group membership can increase the mimicking of sad displays (Bourgeois and Hess 2008). In the context of shared group membership, matching facial expressions during sadness would signal a willingness to provide support. Spending time to provide support is thus restricted to only those in the ingroup. In addition, mirroring another's facial expressions is a precursor to sharing the expression's concomitant emotion (Hatfield et al. 1994). This suggests that we will be more likely to place ourselves in a position of feeling sadness (through facial mimicking) for members of our ingroup than for those in our outgroup.

**Behavior.** We are more likely to mimic the mannerisms of an ingroup member than an outgroup member (Yabar et al. 2006). A familiar social-psychological observation is that the boundaries we draw between ourselves and others are malleable; as a consequence, our tendency to mimic is also variable. The social self (Brewer 1991), our self-definition in terms of our relations with others, is conditional on context; sometimes we seek to define ourselves in terms of uniqueness (independent self-construal), at other times we like to blend in with the collective (interdependent self-construal). Priming of the latter can increase mimicking of another's mannerisms over that seen when the former is primed (van Baaren, Maddux, et al. 2003).

### *Consequences of Copresence*

Copresence has ramifications for interaction outcomes as well. Because we assume that P(OEP) occurs after PEO (assumption 1), we focus on outcomes influenced proximally by P(OEP). As Goffman (1966) noted, people engage in public rituals once they believe they have entered the focal range of the public eye, even when they engage in what he calls "civil inattention." Minimal, nonzero levels of copresence can trigger social categorization processes, as well as the concurrent automatic sense that others have categorized us (Fiske and Neuberg 1990).

Variation in copresence influences a broad range of individual outcomes and was the impetus for classic studies of social facilitation (Triplett 1898; Zajonc 1965). Copresence need not be shared with a physically present human actor; even the implied presence of another sentient being can influence our reflective appraisals (Schlenker et al. 2008) and unconscious processes such as electrodermal activity (Garau et al. 2005). The outcomes

included in this set of propositions have research implications for a range of distinctively sociological processes, including social exchange, group cohesion, and collective action. Copresence likely facilitates, for example, the cohesion that follows from social exchange (Lawler, Thye, and Yoon 2009).

*Proposition 5:* If P(OEP) increases, helping behavior will increase.

An intriguing question that has puzzled sociologists (and researchers in other fields) involves the difficulty of finding self-sacrifice in the service of the larger collective good, that is, the collective action problem. Given the popular assumption that individuals are self-interested, a population of self-serving people should suffer. Yet altruistic behavior is evident (see Colby and Damon 1992; Penner et al. 2005). Numerous solutions exist for the collective action problem (for reviews, see Willer et al. 2010); our goal is to suggest how copresence is a contributing, underlying process that aids in understanding and predicting such collective behavior. In short, a perception of others in need of assistance contributes to internal processes aimed at addressing such perceived need.

**Attention.** One recent solution suggests that groups accord status to individuals who self-sacrifice for a group (Willer 2009). Similarly, others contend that reputation-seeking drives self-sacrifice (e.g., Haley and Fessler 2005). Copresence allows us to better understand these related solutions. For an individual to self-sacrifice, she must be aware of the group's evaluation—an element of copresence must be present—and thus the possibility of social reward. An individual's sense that she is being watched is one basis for prosocial behavior (Willer et al. 2010). Individuals donate more to public goods when contributions are public rather than anonymous (Andreoni and Petrie 2004), even in one-shot public goods games (Rege and Telle 2004). Moreover, cues that facilitate mutual attention, like the presence of human eyes and faces on a computer screen (Burnham and Hare 2007) or collection box (Bateson, Nettle, and Roberts 2006; Haley and Fessler 2005), increase altruism.

Finally, witnesses to an emergency are less likely to assist the person who needs help when others are present (Darley and Latané 1968). Recent findings suggest that bystanders in these situations perceive themselves as part of a crowd—a single entity operating together—even when others are not physically present but their presence is implied (Garcia et al. 2002). This “bystander effect” is less likely to occur if the person who needs help singles out an individual from the crowd with interpersonal gaze, causing the potential helper to feel responsible for assisting (Valentine 1980). The potential helper's experience of copresence shifts from relative anonymity in a crowd to a heightened P(OEP) with the responder. The increased sense of mutual attention results in a greater likelihood of assistance from the bystander.

**Emotion.** Empathy generally increases the likelihood that we will assist another in need (Coke, Batson, and McDavis 1978). Not only does mimicking another's emotion increase our altruism, but having our emotions mirrored produces greater outputs of altruistic behavior. Stel and Harinck (2011), for example, found that being mimicked was associated with prosocial voting patterns.

**Behavior.** Having our behaviors mimicked increases altruism, not only toward the mimicker but also toward others in the surrounding environment. Waitresses who repeated orders to customers enjoyed greater tips compared with those who did not perform the mimicking (van Baaren, Holland, et al. 2003). Along the same lines, research participants whose posture (body orientation, arm and leg position) had been mimicked by a confederate were more likely to assist an experimenter who dropped her pens than were nonmimicked participants (van Baaren et al. 2004).

*Proposition 6:* If P(OEP) increases, P will be more likely to be persuaded by O.

Our focus here is on message-based persuasion, where the design of research studies usually entails measurement of an attitude toward an issue, presentation of a message from another source to change attitudes, and then a second measurement of the attitude toward the issue (Wood 2000).

**Attention.** We focus on the eye, the organ most closely related to a sense of attention (Argyle and Cook 1976). Directing eye gaze at others results in an increase in persuasion (Burgoon, Dunbar, and Segrin 2002). Again, we highlight in the virtual world what is taken for granted in the material world. In immersive virtual environments, interactants' movements are generally rendered veridically onto avatars in the environment, meaning that there is a one-to-one correspondence between an actor's movement and the rendered avatar's movements. Transformed social interaction (Bailenson et al. 2004a, 2004b) decouples this direct correspondence; if an actor nods yes, a programmer can render the avatar as shaking its head to indicate no. In the case of three or more actors interacting in an immersive virtual environment, experimenters can create what is called "augmented gaze" (Bailenson et al. 2004a, 2004b): a speaker's rendered eye gaze is programmed so that each listener in the virtual environment simultaneously sees the speaker looking directly at her, a feat impossible to accomplish in real life. This leads to an increase in the speaker's persuasiveness over the group as a whole (Bailenson et al. 2004a, 2004b).

**Emotion.** Physicians are a primary source of health messages for patients. A physician's display of empathy with a patient increases the patient's adherence to treatment (Squier 1990). Given role expectations about physicians, it may seem less than startling that a physician's display of empathy is important, but it is precisely the task-focused roles they play that hinders their ability to capitalize on opportunities for empathy (Levinson, Gorawara-Bhat, and Lamb 2000).

**Behavior.** In face-to-face negotiations, people who mimic their opponents' mannerisms can persuade their opponents to give them more than can those who do not mimic (Maddux, Mullen, and Galinsky 2008), possibly because mimicry increases trust (Maddux et al. 2008). Effects of behavioral mimicry on persuasion are also seen during human-computer interaction experiments. In one study (Bailenson and Yee 2005), computer-controlled avatars in an immersive virtual environment delivered an argument in favor of a new campus security policy. The avatar either mimicked a research participant's head movements or displayed the recorded movements of a previous participant. All participants knew the avatar was computer-controlled, yet participants in the mimicked condition agreed with the avatar's message more than those in the nonmimicked condition.

*Proposition 7:* P(OEP) moderates impression formation, such that the likelihood P (nonconsciously) uses salient contextual cues to exaggerate social judgments about O will increase with P(OEP).

The "vividness effect" or "salience effect" in research on impression formation suggests factors that make a target more vivid or salient can lead to exaggerated judgments about the target (Taylor et al. 1978). For example, if prior to group discussion, a target is thought to be influential, making the target vivid or salient during discussion leads to a stronger perception of the target being influential (Strack, Erber, and Wicklund 1982). In the decades following the discovery of this effect, additional work has illuminated the role of copresence processes.<sup>7</sup>

**Attention.** Differential attention to salient stimuli can lead to exaggerated inferences about a person (Taylor et al. 1978). Stimuli regarding a person's attributes can become salient

when they are novel or unexpected, but also when they are presented visually (Strack et al. 1982), all instances in which attention to the target increases (propositions 1 and 2). Further corroborating evidence comes from research demonstrating the effect of others' eye gaze on our categorization of them: participants categorized target faces by gender faster when the faces displayed eye gaze directed toward the participant than when eye gaze was averted or eyes were closed (Macrae et al. 2002). Categories serve as cues, from which perceivers can infer traits about a person and produce exaggerated social judgments.

**Emotion.** People make social judgments (Bower 1991) and recall details of interactions (Blaney 1986) that are congruent with their current moods, suggesting that mood serves as a contextual cue that moderates information processing. This selective attention to detail occurs following emotional contagion (Doherty 1998). After watching video instructions in which researchers systematically varied a presenter's emotional expressiveness, participant ratings of photographs intensified on the basis of the mood the presenter displayed. For example, a happy presenter caused participants to exaggerate their ratings of happiness in pictures of happy people.

**Behavior.** Less clear is the association between being mimicked and exaggerated judgment, as most research in this area focuses on behavioral mimicry and judgments that have only a positive valence, such as liking (see proposition 8 for a summary of this research). One exception is a line of work that compares how prior liking or disliking shapes outcomes of mimicry. In one of these studies (Stel et al. 2010), researchers asked some participants to mimic a target manipulated to be likeable or unlikeable. Participants who liked the target reported a statistically significant increase in their liking following the mimicry, suggesting that prior positive judgments became stronger. The same cannot be said of prior negative judgments, however. Participants who disliked the target reported a decrease in their liking of the target after the mimicry, but the drop was not statistically significant.

*Proposition 8:* If P(OEP) increases, O's emotional attachment with P will increase.

Attachment is an emergent mutual interest among interacting individuals, commonly referred to as "chemistry." The role of copresence in establishing attachment was classically described by Durkheim (1912):

If the communication established between [individuals] is to become . . . a fusion of all particular sentiments into one common sentiment, the signs expressing them must themselves be fused into one single and unique resultant. . . . It is by uttering the same cry, pronouncing the same word, or performing the same gesture in regard to some object that they become and feel themselves to be in unison. (p. 230)

**Attention.** Mutual attention is a key substrate for attachment, in both nascent and established relationships (Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal 1990); it can generate arousal and is visible in changes to electrodermal activity (Garau et al. 2005). Mutual attention may become weakly associated with attachment the longer and more stable the relationship, as suggested by Weiss (1991):

A couple whose attachment to each other is of long standing might be identified in a restaurant by a mutual comfort devoid of the intense mutual attention characteristic of courtship. Such a couple would no longer gaze deeply into each other's eyes. (p. 73)

**Emotion.** Emotions make us aware of ourselves and others (Damasio 1999), causing us to search for a reason why we are experiencing that state. Schachter and Singer's (1962) classic

study showed that we look to others to help make sense of a surge in emotional arousal. For Durkheim (and later Collins 2004), shared emotional arousal generated from rituals gets (mis)attributed to any salient and tangible source available to the senses, thus creating collective symbols that evoke attachment. Lawler et al. (2009) experimentally demonstrated this assertion across a range of studies on attachment to exchange partners.

All else being equal, mediated forms of interaction decrease copresence (proposition 1). As a consequence, this leads to reductions in potential attachment. Indeed, research shows that e-mail may reduce connectedness among coworkers (Menchik and Tian 2008; Sarbaugh-Thompson and Feldman 1998). All is not lost, however, as evidenced by signs of attachment in virtual communities (Wellman et al. 1996) and research on longitudinal groups showing that affiliation levels across a group's life course are similar between those meeting face to face and those using CMC (Walther and Burgoon 1992).

**Behavior.** The chameleon effect likely evolved out of the need to coordinate joint activity; its purpose then shifted to bonding people together (Lakin et al. 2003). Chartrand and Bargh (1999) found that participants who were mimicked by a confederate provided more positive evaluations of the confederate compared with participants who were not mimicked. Individuals motivated to establish rapport with others tend to nonconsciously mimic behaviors of these others (Lakin and Chartrand 2003), and those who already have rapport between them tend to nonconsciously mimic one another (LaFrance 1979). Similarly, ingratiation is another type of behavior-matching that leads to increased liking from a partner (Jones 1965).

## IMPLICATIONS

Our model detaches copresence from a strict analysis of human actors who are physically collocated. Given the importance of copresence for theorizing about micro-macro linkages, it is logical to briefly consider the macro implications of revisiting and reconceptualizing copresence.

The reconceptualized model of copresence illuminates mediating factors in the process by which macrostructures are (re)enacted. That copresence toward another actor increases with a salient social identity (proposition 4), and reflected copresence increases emotional attachment (proposition 8), runs parallel with the idea that orientations toward racial homophily sustain workplace inequalities and, in turn, the racial stratification system in the United States (Ibarra 1993). The model contributes to the confluence of support for processes like this while pointing to new, underlying mechanisms. Specifically, we highlight the fundamental importance of individual perceptions as a micro-level phenomenological construct that supports the edifice of social interaction and social structure. In this, classical symbolic interactionists were correct: perception is reality, insofar as it channels meaningful social action in the Weberian sense. This emphasis on meaning, of course, means that social interaction never occurs outside of structural contexts and established cultural meaning systems; people bring a host of prereflective beliefs, biases, emotions, self-concepts, and linguistic understandings to any interaction. How variations in these phenomena influence subjective copresence is gist for future inquiry.

Finally, the notion that copresence operates similarly across modes of interaction implies that patterns of inequality resemble one another. Even with the advent of communication technologies that increasingly permeate all life spheres, the potential to connect with anyone and break systems of inequality remains unfulfilled (see also Zhao and Elesh 2008). With whom we can establish copresence, regardless of communication mode, is organized by social barriers such as norms (proposition 1) and status hierarchies (proposition 3).



The model provides a parsimonious account of a wide spectrum of interactions. We next demonstrate this parsimony and apply the model to shed light on two contemporary puzzles, each using a different mode of interaction. First, we apply the model to understand methodological concerns recently raised by the increased prevalence of CMC in laboratory experiment protocols. Second, we suggest avenues to address disparities in physician-patient rapport, a relationship in which copresence has decreased because of health care reorganization.

### *Methodological Artifacts*

Unintentional protocol differences across experimental studies can affect observed interpersonal processes, including influence rates in status characteristics theory studies (Troyer 2001, 2002). Status characteristics theory explains how macrostructural inequality shapes inequalities in task groups, such as differential influence over group decisions. Increasingly, laboratory researchers examine such interpersonal processes with CMC systems that control the actions of confederates and the delivery of instructions to guard against unsystematic variance in measured outcomes (Blascovich et al. 2002; Rashotte, Webster, and Whitmeyer 2005). We are just learning how these advanced protocols might alter experimental results (see Campos-Castillo 2012). In particular, the differential availability of visual cues in these systems has been flagged as an unintended source of variation for influence rates in the status characteristics literature (Kalkhoff and Thye 2006; Kalkhoff, Younts, and Troyer 2008). Specifically, the association between relative status and acceptance of a group member's influence attempts is moderated by the extent that the CMC system makes visual cues available (Kalkhoff et al. 2008): the more accessible the visual cues, the more often a low status member accepts influence attempts and the less often a high status member rejects influence attempts. Troyer (2001) suggests that the availability of visual cues in a CMC system shapes the salience of status distinctions, such that availability is positively related to the perceived status differential.

We suggest that copresence is the intervening variable in these findings and advise further exploration for how copresence can alter status organizing processes. A CMC system that affords the exchange of visual cues will have higher PEO than one that obstructs them (proposition 1). Because visual cues are exchanged between a research participant (P) and a partner (O), who is ostensibly a computer-controlled confederate, this facilitates P(OEP) (assumption 1). Furthermore, because research participants in these studies are instructed to take their partners' actions into consideration (Berger et al. 1977), and these instructions are seemingly communicated to both the participant and the partner, we can assume for simplicity that PEO and P(OEP) have a strong and positive correlation in this particular situation. Thus, P(OEP) would likely be greater in CMC systems that allow for the exchange of visual cues than in those that do not. In situations in which P(OEP) is high, salient contextual cues like status differences are used to exaggerate social judgments (proposition 7). As a result, expectations of task competency that stem from relative status are exaggerated when visual information about the partner is available, contributing to the pattern of influence documented earlier.

### *Disparities in Physician-Patient Rapport*

The restructuring of health care that began in the 1970s altered the relationship between physician and patient (Mechanic 1998). This "market logic" (Scott et al. 2000) is one orientation currently guiding decision making in health care, which favors decisions that maximize profit. Medical visits are now often divided into focused acts (e.g., registration, intake,

diagnosis, and payment) in which the patient briefly interacts with a specialized agent. This division of labor results in the attending physician spending (on average) 15 minutes with each patient (Fiscella and Epstein 2008). Within those 15 minutes, both socioemotional and instrumental tasks must be accomplished (for extensive analysis, see Maynard 2003). Financial reimbursement to the provider is based on diagnosis, leading the allocation of time to often favor instrumental tasks deemed more crucial for diagnosis. Lengthier clinical visits usually increase physician-patient rapport because they increase socioemotional tasks (Fiscella and Epstein 2008; Gross et al. 1998).

Copresence is linked to attachment (proposition 8), opening a new perspective on health disparities based on our model. In the modern medical interaction, rapport is low because time constraints limit the exchange of entrainment cues (proposition 1) and likely increase the use of schematic processing (proposition 2). Racial and ethnic minority patients face an additional barrier to achieving physician-patient rapport. Race and ethnicity are common social distinctions by which individuals categorize themselves and others (Fiske and Neuberg 1990), making them salient social identities. Given a physician workforce primarily composed of Caucasians (Cohen and Steinecke 2006), racial and ethnic minority patients are the most likely to receive care from physicians who do not share their racial/ethnic backgrounds (Saha et al. 2000). Patients in racial/ethnic discordant provider relationships tend to experience poorer health and health care outcomes than do patients in concordant ones (see, e.g., Cooper et al. 2003). Racial/ethnic discordance will therefore lower PEO from that observed within a concordant dyad (proposition 4), further diminishing rapport for racial/ethnic minority patients. On the basis of our model, health care providers should spend time amplifying signals of mutual attention, behavior, and emotion (proposition 8; for a similar solution, see Gross et al. 1998).

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Copresence is an old concept, but it has not been the explicit subject of much recent sociological theorizing, much less empirical research. In this article, we refined previous notions. Our goal has been to foster greater focus on copresence as a building block in social research across a range of interaction modes beyond face-to-face experiences. Copresence, understood as an intraindividual variable that fluctuates on the basis of social context, is a product of P's entrainment to another and P's perception of reciprocal entrainment. Our definition subsumes other treatments and offers steps toward developing a research program to test and extend claims about its association with social processes. Conceptualizing copresence as a function of two dimensions, PEO and P(OEP), composed of components (mutual attention, behavior, and emotion) described in the literature contributes to its measurement. As a result, we have a fuller understanding of the micro-level (re)enactment of macrostructures.

While our propositions situate copresence as a factor in ongoing social interaction, we did not expand upon other critical issues that might contribute to a broader understanding of social interaction. Copresence consonance, for example, may help predict additional variance in social outcomes, while undergirding the vast interactional literatures developed by others since Triplett's (1898) initial forays into physically collocated interactants. We also did not engage issues surrounding copresence expectations, potentially important aspects for understanding observed social outcomes. Emotional experience is commonly cast as a product of the extent to which expectations are met (for a discussion, see Turner 2007). Finally, the model also anchors a complementary concept, privacy, in the social context. We stated earlier that privacy could be conceived of as a state where P(OEP) is zero. Privacy is a concept in need of anchoring in the social context to delineate the conditions under which people feel privacy is violated; the concept can then be used to inform public policy (see

Nissenbaum 2010). Just as copresence is crucial for sustaining the collective (Durkheim 1912), so too is privacy essential for “making life with an unbearable (or sporadically unbearable) person possible” (Schwartz 1968:741). Research is needed in this area to place a scope around the propositions we listed. For example, emotional attachment (proposition 8) cannot follow from copresence indefinitely. All of these issues can be approached using the model of copresence we present here.

In addition to refining our propositions, future research might advance our conceptualization of the three components of copresence. For example, we treated mutual emotion as occurring through mimicry of facial expressions. In this sense, mutual emotion is a specific case of mutual behavior; the two cannot be conceptually separated. The general consensus of existing research is that behavioral mimicry of facial expressions is a necessary step for empathy and contagion (Preston and de Waal 2002), although recent debates suggest that mimicry is neither necessary nor sufficient (for a discussion, see Decety 2010).

These limitations notwithstanding, we hope that this article will serve as impetus for further exploration of the theoretical and empirical relationships surrounding copresence as a social phenomenon that must be attended to by sociological theory.

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## NOTES

1. From this point forward, when we reference copresence, we are using this definition. We use the phrase “physical copresence” to refer to the common binary use of the term.
2. We gloss over individual-level differences in the potential to focus on others.
3. The contextual forces we list here are exogenous to copresence, but they may be outcomes of additional perceptions of the setting. For example, actors’ relative status in a task group setting (discussed in proposition 3) can result from their own perceptions of status as well as what they believe others perceive of them (see for example, Troyer and Younts 1997).
4. Undoubtedly these may also influence P(OEP). For space considerations, we focus these propositions on PEO.
5. A possible implication here is that a high-status actor is less collectively oriented than a low-status actor in a group. Collective orientation involves the belief that it is legitimate and crucial to take the behavior of others into account for task success (Berger et al. 1977). If a high-status actor has lower PEO than a low-status actor, the high-status actor would be less likely to attend to behaviors of the low-status actor than the converse. For the scope conditions of the theory to apply, it is likely that PEO never reaches zero for any of the actors. Lower collective orientation on the part of the high-status actor would decrease the success of the low-status actor’s influence attempts, a statement that aligns well with research in this area.
6. Proposition 4 is not incompatible with proposition 3, as status and social identity can jointly shape interaction in task-oriented and collectively oriented groups (Kalkhoff and Barnum 2000).
7. Another line of research suggests what at first might appear to be an opposing view: low copresence (brought about by the lack of visual information available in text-only communication; proposition 1) produces exaggerated social judgment (Postmes and Spears 2002). We are not in a position to properly adjudicate between these two lines of research, but we point out that studies offering a finding contrary to proposition 7 collected measures in a setting that did not emphasize a time pressure during judgment (e.g., Hancock and Dunham 2001; Postmes and Spears 2002), as opposed to studies that support the proposition (e.g., Strack et al. 1982). Additional support for our conclusion comes from studies in which researchers explicitly assessed whether the presence of time pressure led to exaggerated social judgments (e.g., De Dreu 2003; Dijkster and Koomen 1996).

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