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IDENTITIES SEEK CONTROL

IDENTITIES spring up out of efforts at control in turbulent context. But our everyday sense of reality then guides us. Being common sense, it enables communication among us, and thus makes our lives work. This book argues that "common sense" also obscures the social processes that lie behind us and our everyday perceptions.

An identity emerges for each of us only out of efforts at control amid contingencies and contentions in interaction. These control efforts need not have anything to do with domination over other identities. Before anything else, control is about finding footings among other identities. Such footing is a position that entails a stance, which brings orientation in relation to other identities. Biophysical context, of course, also impacts footings, most obviously as lines of visibility.

The control efforts by one identity are social realities for other identities. So this identity can be perceived by others as having an unproblematic continuity in social footing, even though it is adding through its contentions with others to the contingencies they face.

Thus, social contexts assert normality that is at odds with the improvisations and stumblings in direct experience. Perceived normality is a gloss on the reality of turbulent efforts at control by identities as they seek footings. Smooth social stories intrude into common sense. News broadcasts imply that everyday life is not newsworthy.

Researchers should put on different eyeglasses that unfold the complexities of the everyday. We often work outward from observation of some tangible pattern and can disregard notions of an overarching "society." At all scales, normality, and happenstance are opposite sides of the same coin of social action. **Sociology has to account for chaos and normality together**, and this book works toward suitably flexible framings.

Identity achieves social footing as both a source and a destination of communications to which identities attribute meaning.[1] Consequently, without footing, identities would jump around in a social space without meaning and thus without communication. Gaining control presupposes a stable standpoint for orientation. Identity be-

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[1] Theorist Luhmann (1995, chapter 2) lays out a subtle yet precise argument for meaning emerging in co-constitution of communication among identities.

comes a point of reference from which information can be processed, evaluated. Footings thus must be reflexive; they supply an angle of perceptions along with orientation and assessments that guide interaction with other identities, to yield control. So all these processes among identities in their footings can be understood only as an inextricable intermixture of social with cultural spreads, out of which meanings are constructed jointly.

1.1. Identities Out of Events in Context

A firm, a community, a crowd, oneself on the tennis court, encounters of strangers on a sidewalk—each may be identities. Identity here is not restricted to our everyday notion of person, of self, which takes for granted consciousness and integration, and presupposes personality.[2] Instead I generalize identity to any source of action, any entity to which observers can attribute meaning not explicable from biophysical regularities. Those regularities are subsidiary to social context as environment, and persons will appear as bundles of identities.

I claim that all scopes and scales of social process induce themselves in some such fashion as the following: Identities trigger out of events—that is to say, out of switches in surroundings—seeking control over uncertainty and thus over fellow identities. Identities build and articulate ties to other identities in network-domains, *netdoms* for short. However, netdoms themselves remain subject to interruption from further switching with attendant netdoms. Thus, the world comes from identities attempting control within their relations to other identities. In their search for control, identities switch from netdom to netdom, and each switching is at once a decoupling *from* somewhere and an embedding *into* somewhere.

An Internet forum, as illustration, can flesh out this claim. There you can create an account in order to participate and use it. It's not the mere subscription but the postings that create your identity in a forum while linking you by stories to others and their comments. You don't exist in the forum as a whole person but as a user, contributing to the specific topic of the forum—e.g., football or sociology. Since you can have accounts in many forums, you can switch between them by logging out of, say, the football forum so as to log on to the sociology forum. We can see the forums as netdoms. The important point is that, although you log out, your identity in that forum, your account, remains, so

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[2] The work of psychologist Mischel (1990) supports this turn away from common sense: see chapter 4.

your postings are not deleted by the logout process. In this sense, your activity has left a social trace consisting of the ties to other identities in the forum. But the interaction has just switched from one netdom to another.

The only moment in which you are less than a bundle of identities is in sleep. Each morning's awakening puts together a you that had been deconstructed within social and physical protections around sleep.[3] You reconstruct out of various identities triggered earlier in switches among topics amid ties with others. The same few general sorts of identity can be found here as in social context.

Many other tangible examples surround you: switches in and out of committee meetings, mealtime switches, shopping expeditions . . . The list is endless, and subsequent chapters troll through them. Communication remains central. Human social process typically orients around meanings of events and interpretations of relations among identities.

Speech presupposes language, and I aim for these chapters to provide a basis for appreciating how languages themselves emerged as by-products of the continuing spread of dances in identity and control. This communication need not be explicit speech—or even extension of speech by nonverbal means. For example, consider how students induct a newly arrived professor at a university into the implicit standards of grading and cognitive framing in curriculum for their campus (e.g., that technical but not historical sophistication is encouraged): none could articulate, and most are unaware of, the complex of pressures this subtle communication brings to bear. It is indeed effective control, but there is no intention there. It does not rely on intention to get fresh action, instead smoothing the new participant into the previously existing flow, the previously existing expectations.

Social organization is a by-product of the multiplication and the cumulation of these processes in control, which, inversely, shape how identities result from social process. The connections may be quite obscure, as in reshufflings of careers resulting from patterns of switchings in jobs. Also, identities and their contentions come wrapped up in and with larger contexts of many sorts (cf. Tilly *The Contentious French*). Interpretations emerge in patterns, weaving topics among identities and ties. When contending counteractions result in some dynamic equilibrium, even common sense perceives context as social structure. This is, for example, the case with kinship or social stratification.

Social organization has two faces: blockage and allowance of fresh action. The blockage can come from the intermeshing of identities de-

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[3] There is great variety in these protective orders, from tribal fireside vigil to modern dormitory: see the extensive survey in Aubert and White (1959).

spite some latitude, some decoupling. The other face cuts open the Sargasso Sea of social obligation and context to achieve openness sufficient for getting fresh action. Each of us has experienced how hard it is to push even the smallest social organization in a given direction. By what means, and when, does it become possible to break through rigidity in social organization to get fresh action at large scale and small? How can one effect action by intention despite social context? Are there any reliable guides to getting action? But then again, if there are, would that not generate paradox? This book builds toward chapter 7, where recursive conjugations of control across levels are examined to identify ways to overcome, sometimes, that blockage of action that is built into social organization.

My central claim entails that the lives of these identities are stochastic flows over time whose primary shapers and switchers come from the others, not just in local detail but also as overall patterns and dynamics—as co-constituted context. It follows that blockage and getting action provide the key contrast necessary for making sense of the complex arguments to follow.

*1.2. Playground as Illustration

[In each chapter, with a section marked with an asterisk, I will point out how the studies there can also be seen from other perspectives. This playground example will be taken up again, more than casually, in sections 1.5 and 1.7, and in sections 2.2.1, 2.2.4, 4.3.2, 7.2.2, and 8.1.5.]

As an example both of how identities are formed and of how they help to create each other, consider children interacting across a playground. We can tease out some complexities from just this seemingly simple context. Dynamic models can be based and tested on observation of spatial patterns in free play of young children.[4]

Likely as not, the identity for a given child on this playground was triggered from contingencies during play. The child's identity links to other identities in the playground through stories in that setting (e.g., Tom is the bad guy who always breaks the toys of other kids).

Strings of children may be seen rushing along, some following a leading child, while in other sets each child is just tagging along after a friend known from neighborhood or home or school. If the children

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[4] Joel Cohen's Ph.D. thesis (cf. Cohen 1971) is a notable attempt. And see the observations of adult freely forming groups by James (1953) as modeled by Coleman (1964; cf. White 1962 for critique).

are older, one can record some continuing networks of relations, of ties between pairs of children.

Or, a cluster of children may go about together because they are similar in their own and/or others' eyes. This recognition of similarity may be implicit, as when all the members are teenagers or each child is a fan of singer *X*; or it may be explicit, as when the group are Hispanics or are "fatsoes." Mostly these clusters are unnamed, even unrecognized. They depend on the kinds and degree of activity going on. Such clusters can come to be perceived as, and act as, identities, if they reappear repeatedly or in a variety of other contexts.

Certainly what you observe at a given moment is there only because of some underlying orderliness of process. This orderliness partially comes from, and is reflected in, talk. One can listen to the standard tales being offered across the playground in accounting for what this or that cluster does. Stories go along with expressing habits and habitus. But it is conflicts and inconsistencies in which a child finds itself caught up that start generating identity. With children it is not repetitive family domestic life, and not playing with the same bunch, but rather clashing gangs that cause, and work from, identities. A common set of stories, as we shall see in chapter 2, is what can meld such identities into a network.

This orderliness is also affected by the physical environment. How slides and swings are arrayed influences how children sort themselves into groups, with geometric ordering overcoming some social disorder.[5] And other identities of the children come from mismatches elsewhere between two netdoms like home and school, for example, when a kind of food newly enjoyed with peers at school is rejected when the child goes home. Or the mismatch may occur when the clothes that classmates insist upon, as their badge of belonging, are disdained by a parent at home who resists purchasing them.

Any identity comes out of the energy *for*, which becomes the energy *from*, bringing together many disparate bits, as when the child becomes the weird dresser in the parents' eyes.[6] Having an identity in the common sense of that term requires continually reproducing a joint construction across distinct settings. This is better described as having a bundle of identities. That is the dictionary notion of the person, a placeholder term embracing identities, often conflicting, from different settings.

[5] See Alexander (1964) and the actor network theory as elaborated by Bruno Latour and collaborators.

[6] Garfinkel (1967) emphasized this with counterexamples, odd probes such as knocking on a restroom door to "greet" its occupant.

Even though the playground is a casual setting, one can observe conflicting identities and orderliness at the same time. If the playground is observed over a long period,[7] certain clusters of children will emerge repeatedly. This is what is meant by "finding footing" through control struggles. Choosing up sides for games will go on. This may partition children into teams, almost every child going to one team or another, but likely there will be a straggle of leftovers. Thereby identities find positions in relation to other identities. Together with the stories that tie them together, structure and meaning are produced. Any such crowd may partition anew, into teams, which make claims about specialization in relations and tasks. Or the crowd may dissolve instead into casual chasing or gossiping. Neat accounts only faintly reflect the real turbulence, energized by unending searches for self and control. In this sense, the social never stands still. Identities couple and decouple, thus continuously creating social space and time.

On the playing field, teams may come to visit for tournaments. If so, grown-ups probably come along with the visitors, and this activates local adults to come out and spend time on the playground. These adults favor and slight various children, patronize them, according to how they themselves get caught up in the tournament. A much more elaborate social organization is created, or rather is shown to have been there in potential, and in the perceptions of some, all along.

1.3. Control and Structural Equivalence

The triggering of one identity activates control searches by other identities, with their own impetus toward control of any and all exigencies, including each other's. Each control effort presupposes and works in terms of realities for other identities.[8] Endemic efforts at control are exactly outside any given identity, and are fitted into relations by drawing on the outputs of undisrupted identities. Observer always is in some interaction with observed.

On a small scale, identities in a grouping may come to be seen as structurally equivalent by themselves, and by still other identities. This equivalence may be because of a shared attribute, or because all are

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[7] As has been done in a series of distinguished investigations in social science: e.g., Opie and Opie (1969); Maynard (1985).

[8] In Luhmann's words: "An important structural consequence that invariably follows from the construction of self-referential system . . . is *abandoning the idea of unilateral control*. There may be hierarchies, asymmetries, or differences in influence, but no part of the system can control others without itself being subject . . . any control must be exercised in anticipation of counter-control." (1995, p. 36)

tied to each other in a clique, but the basis may be more indirect and abstract. To gain footings means to fashion structural equivalence.

Control is both anticipation of and response to eruptions in environing process. Control projects participate in how identities array in social structures, with social order as a possible by-product. **Social processes and structure are thus traces from successions of control efforts**. In the words of Chanowitz and Langer (1980, p. 120), "Control is not something that we possess. It is some way that we *are*. . . . The exercise of control is a whole situation that cannot faithfully be fully reproduced as a number of parts or measures." And further, control efforts become entangled in ways that need not be visualized as projects of individual actors.

The accuracy of observing the process is enhanced through deciphering which identities are structurally equivalent with respect to context, overall or partial. And control can be equally real when it is fugitive, since it uses disorder as material from which to evoke order.[9] So control efforts are responses by identities to endless stochastic contingencies, to which others' control efforts add. Context is crucial; context is experienced rather than designed. This is why "power" is not the right term for these processes.

1.4. Netdoms, Networks, and Disciplines

Control efforts take place in demarcated social spaces. Netdom is a suitable descriptor: "dom" from domain of topics and "net" from network relations. Identities switch from netdom to netdom, finding footings in different networks in differing domain contexts.

The dualism of network and domain is essential, and make no mistake, it is a radical departure from common sense. We won't reach the singular "person" until chapter 4. And an isolated single "relation" or tie is accorded no reality outside the special historical and social circumstances so brilliantly portrayed by Luhmann in *Love and Passion*. Netdom is not a thing, it is experiential process, usually transitory but with impact so awesome that participants cannot bring it into focus. Luhmann in his general theory (1995) takes a parallel road of deriving social organization with use of a single term; and his "communication," like netdom, presupposes the mixture of relation and topic, plus understanding.

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[9] If we assume with Luhmann that all events are fugitive and that they are the elements of social systems, then control becomes the attempt to constrain the possible events.
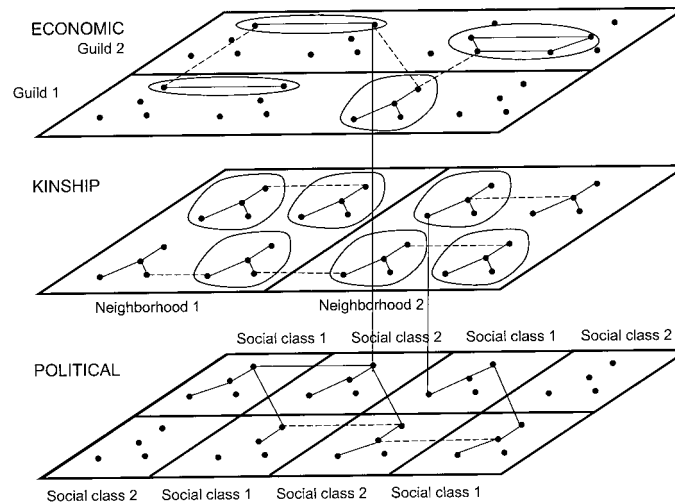
Figure 1.1: Netdom switching is not just for small-scale and informal settings, but is part of business and power life as seen in Padgett and McLean (2006). Concepts on figure are from this source, not from *Identity and Control*. Solid lines are "constitutive ties," dotted lines "relational social exchanges," and oblongs formal organizations. Dots are individuals.

We will repeatedly make use of studies of multiple networks in Renaissance Florence conducted by John Padgett and coauthors. Already here, without attempting any explanation yet of the case, I will exhibit a diagram—see figure 1.1—of theirs that you can interpret in terms of netdom switches. The constructs I am introducing are not meant just for small-scale, casual, and current processes.

Networks are overview reports from the dynamics of overlapping of, and transitivity in and across, netdoms. Each network is sustained through invocations by those identities of a common set of stories that explain away anomalies. Networks lay out the space of social action.

A further concept to be introduced in more detail in chapter 3 is disciplines.

Disciplines are self-constituting conveners of social action, which each induce an identity on a new level. In this book they are as important as networks. Disciplines build around commitments that constrain constituent identities, very different from networks with their flexible sets of stories. Disciplines are concepts about *processes* rather than about *structure* in sociocultural life. Depending on which discipline is at work, control struggles take place according to different rules and in different frames.

I introduce three different species of disciplines—Interfaces, Arenas, and Councils—around their distinctive valuations and contingencies. Much practical activity—whether the production of a frozen pizza or the dinner party in a country club—keeps on getting done and is shaped in all these venues. Disciplines can translate into normality and habit at some level. But chaos and accident are the sources and bases for all identities, and it is identities seeking control that fuels practical activity whatever the context.

1.5. Overview: Identities Out of Mismatch within Contexts of Control

Now that I have suggested the main paths, including networks and disciplines, through which to specify social process, let us look again at identities. Identity is produced by the contingency to which it is a response, an intervention in the process to come, at whatever level and in whatever realm. Seeking control is not some option of choice, it comes out of the way identities get triggered and keep rolling along as process. So, basically, an identity comes along with its footing out of mismatch, by drawing on both observation and reflexive self-observation.

Such a mismatch can occur at many scopes and levels. A "position" is identity triggered a level up from its occupants. To illustrate: Recognition of the position of "presidency" is triggered by the mismatch between Jefferson and Washington, or for that matter between Reagan and Franklin Delano Roosevelt. One can see "troubleshooter" as an identity coming out of mismatch a further level up, and so identity can take on life through imputations of others. I hope, for example, that this book will be draped with an identity by readers, and certainly mismatches will be at the root of that process, mismatches with prior works and their identities, as well as with observations and debates among commentators.

There is need for a population dynamics of identities, quite distinct from current demography. But within any one of these many sorts of realizations of identities there will be heterogeneity. Within the same network, for example, identities will appear to differ in strength, visibility, and longevity. Such discriminations and their inventories must be keyed to particular studies, but I can make some general points. Rediscovery and reshaping continue for every identity.[10] An identity is as likely to target itself for a control effort as it is to target another identity.

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[10] On disappearance of identities, consult the discussion of "case breakers" and "dead" cases by Bearman, Faris, and Moody (1999); and Bearman, Moody, and Faris (2002).

Now let us return to my initial sketch of just four general sorts of identities, four senses of identity. For simplicity, I discuss these identities as tagged to individual human beings. Their mismatches include the rushing and jarring of daily living, along with the contingencies of ill health and of arguments. I turn to four particular dynamics for individual identity.

Identity for a human begins as and from a primordial and continuing urge to control, which can be seen always, in all contexts. For example, a new child on a playground has an overriding need to find some sort of stable social footing so that the child can know how to act in an otherwise chaotic social world. This is not necessarily a harsh struggle over status and rank: only occasionally does this lead to bullying on the playground. Identity in this first sense is the expression in social context of the same urge for secure footing that in physical settings induces behavioral patterns of posture such as leaning forward when climbing stairs.

A grouping can also have identity in this first sense, exhibited in its solidarity. Seeking celebration for example can yield a label for a group. All chapters of this book invoke instances of this **first sense** of identity.

Identity with a second, more elaborate, and quite distinct sense occurs apart from networks. This sense is akin to "face." It is identity achieved and expressed or operationalized as part of some distinct social grouping in which each member has face just because it is a social face, one of a differentiated set of faces that together make up that grouping. The differentiation may be uneven and the grouping may be loose. A simple example is a group at a table in a dorm eating dinner: chances are these students know each other and are accustomed to eating together often, and so have come to tend to take certain stances—one as topic selector, another as clown, and so forth.

Here the grouping necessarily has identity as an entity on a distinct level. It is also recognized by diverse other identities and observers through, and as participating and communicating in, social process. Celebration of this identity builds narrative. Around identity in this **second sense** each discipline builds its more complex and sophisticated process.

The tension between identity and control can be seen as conformity versus creativity. Identities figure in fury and fear as well as sweetness and light, as aspect of identity seeking control and thereby becoming creative. This creativity corresponds to an additional, **third sense** of identity that builds on the first two. This is identity from frictions and errors across different social settings. This third sense of identity figures especially in the formation of network ties.

This third sense of identity arises from the central fact of social organization: each human lives switching among netdoms. Even as children, we mix with different groups while intermixing our living in different realms. Moreover, each of us continues in several different roles which cross between distinct realms, such as family and village and job and secret society, so that our actions and thence our selves crosscut these realms. Even as adults we do not often try to include all these realms in any one narrative we call career.

All this transports to a higher level, to description of position and the like. But there need be nothing unusual or esoteric in this third sense of identity. Return to the homely example of a child on a playground. The child may pick up a new way of wearing (or tearing) its clothes as being proper (an aspect of the second sense of identity). But then the child finds, upon arriving home, that peer-proper is not family-proper. Such contradictions—all the screwups, mistakes, errors, and social noise—in life are just what bring about establishment of identity in this third sense. It is a sense that each of us achieved when still a child, and it is in the third and first senses that any identity initially comes into existence.

Identity in this third sense is urgent; it thus both implodes and explodes with the greatest of energies. These are, for example, the energies which generate and which call forth artworks along with narrative creativity. This third sense of identity may be construed by an outside observer as critic, assessing the outcomes through a dossier indicating some broad range of possibilities.

This third, and crucial, sense of identity has no application in utopias, because identity in this sense arises precisely from contradictions across social disciplines impinging on the same actor, from mismatches and social noise. Literary utopias acknowledge the central fact of multiple roles for persons, but what makes them utopian is imagining individuals to be in roles that are combined in consistently prescribed packages.

There is also a **fourth sense** of identity, which is close to what is usually meant by identity in ordinary talk. This fourth sense of identity corresponds to an ex post account, after the fact, about identity; it is career seen from the outside. Whereas change is enabled by identities in the third sense, the fourth sense of identity is all about rationalization and about failures of action. And so the fourth sense combines with the third in network phenomenology.

Yet all four senses of identity attach to the same constructed reality, as emanations from mismatch as it becomes observed. Each sense weaves together layers of expression in myriad ways. These are ways that can change. A painting can reflect a second or a fourth (and boring) sense of identity, just as some story or play can suggest the inter-

esting third or first senses; but the reverse occurs as well. It would
therefore be silly to reify the four senses of identity, to set them up as
separate personae, or wholly distinct sorts of positions. Narrative can
and does weave them together; the narrator's business is to generate,
for the time being, a larger sense of membership that embraces both
auditors and author.[11]

1.6. Meanings Come in Switchings: Scientific Precursors

Netdom shows habit as surface. This is dual-sided habit, as one finds
in Bourdieu's (1996a, b) construct of habitus. But now perception comes
only with and from contrast, as a process (Gibson 1979). Thus, fresh
meaning emerges for humans only with switching, as from one netdom
to another. Switching is central to this theory and will appear again and
again at different scopes and levels. Again this point is unorthodox, de-
parting from common sense, but as I noted earlier I hope to show you
that it unties some knots and riddles in existing social science.

I make only a partial claim for originality of this theory in sociology,
since I think much the same root idea was found long ago in works
by Garfinkel, by Cicourel, by Goffman and in linguistics by Halliday.
Recently it is again being championed, by Vaughan (2002), by Powell
(2002), and by Mische (2007; and see Mische and White 1998).

My radical innovation is different. **I disallow the bracketing, the
setting aside, of context** when penetrating and following particular
situations and episodes, whether commonsensical or Garfinkelian.
Bracketing is in direct contradiction with how I conceptualize identity.
Instead, I venture short-circuiting proposals in order to bring contex-
tual reality cheek by jowl with particular situational encounters. I do
this rather than endlessly trace out particular situations. I try to emu-
late playwright rather than narrator.

Psychological perspectives offer precursors too. I have already cited
James Gibson. An early parallel is *Personal Knowledge* by Michael Po-
lanyi (1958). That book argues that all knowing is an essentially tacit
integration of subsidiary clues, *from* which we attend, into focal wholes,
to which we attend. Much the same was also said by Fritz Heider, from
whom sociologist Niklas Luhmann drew guidance, to construe social
process as communication. Here I bring this insight still further outside
the minds to dissect it into component social processes.[12]

[11] This also addresses the problem tackled by Bearman, Faris, and Moody in "Blocking
the Future": see previous note.

[12] This extraction is supported by a recent study (Arnoldi 2006) of stock market de-
rivatives. Futures of various sorts long have been around and actively traded, growing
into the orgy of the 1990s that centered in sophisticated mathematical modeling. The

I will argue that linguistics provides the deepest-rooted evidence in support of switchings among netdoms. Its most direct evidence is the universality of deictics (grammatical pointers like pronouns, "this" and "that", "here" and "now", and so on). Careful examinations (as in Hanks 1990, 1993; Lucy 1993; as well as in Halliday 1994) suggest that deictics have evolved exactly to support coherence of discourse across switches in netdoms by providing terms that everyone can and does use to maintain footings with others through changes in netdoms.

1.7. Culture in Play, and in Emergencies

Speaking of meaning, where is culture in all this? Culture in the sense of museums and libraries is set aside for this discussion. I think of living culture as a process recognized in societal institutions and practices, which are taken up in chapter 5, as by-products but also co-constitutors of social process at all levels. The previous playground example could concern just some empty lot or field, but I was in fact thinking of a school or city playground, which would be subject to more or less explicit institution and practices, even aside from coaches and teachers.

Left to play by themselves indoors, young children often take on roles—mommy, doctor, nurse, cowboy, teacher. Developmental psychology attests to and elaborates this common knowledge. And recently sociolinguist Sawyer (1992) specified the discourse pragmatics that he observed over a year of observation.

One can conclude that from an early age, kids are made aware of more complex forms and higher levels of social process, over which they try to acquire some mastery. Their play is the beginning of the sophistication in transposition that everyone needs just to participate as a "normal" adult. Sophistication, however, is not the same as analytic awareness—such constant awareness indeed would induce stumbling instead of normality.

Accidents offer a different prism. Unlike children's play, they are not pretend switchings. In a city, an accident often evokes an emergency team and ambulance, which in chapter 3 will be modeled as a discipline. The injured person experiences a vivid switch to another net-

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volumes became so huge and the markups so small that electronic trading from computer terminals replaced Chicago-style bidding auctions. What Arnoldi found is that the lack of face-to-face contact among a set of traders, with all its back and forth signaling through discourse and body language, crippled their intuitions and thus their actions: so much so that face-to-face contact was introduced again through various subsidiary auctions.

dom, and then likely a continuing succession of switches. Whether in Paris or Milwaukee, though, the situation will unfold according to much the same script from culture, inducing interlocking role behavior along the network lines presented in chapter 2.

Culture is being naturalized here as the product of social process. This is analogous to developments in information science, such as cybernetics early on, and general systems theory, especially as specified by Luhmann. There is also an analogue here to dynamic control theory, and to Kalman filters. The latter are self-learning, not just self-directing, programs.

1.8. Challenging Both Extremes

Within sociology and other social sciences, there is a strong resurgence of an individualist mode of theorizing under the label "rational choice theory" (Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman 1992; Coleman 1990; Coleman and Nowak 1986; Lindenberg 1989a; Riker 1982). Such theory takes identity for granted and ignores the nesting of contexts, and thereby tries to explain away control.[13] Some institutional economists themselves take exception to that theory (Favereau 2005; and see the volume by Lazega and Favereau 2001).

Rational choice theories build upon a myth of the person, as some preexisting entity, and focus on how choice is made and how choices interact, once made. But although one can usually impute ends from actions, these "ends" often are, despite protestations, mere by-products of previous history as adapted to current circumstance. These theorists need not deny this empirical weakness because they can point to the sheer scope of prediction possible on those assumptions.

The push toward some rational choice theory is in itself sensible. Indeed it is rational, because it mimics the push in other sciences toward what is called mean field theory.[14] This is an approximate theory of long-range order through calculation of self-consistent fields. At first sight, of course, rational choice theory might instead seem to ape models of short-range order which concentrate on immediate environs. But no, the long-range order of a self-consistent field is essential to the calculations in a theory of rational choice. This is because the goals and

[13] But see Hechter (1987) for an attempt at institutional explanation. And Pizzorno (1991) reviews exactly this difficulty in Hobbes.

[14] Also called the Mean Field Approximation, or Self-Consistent Fields; see de Gennes (1979) and Ziman (1979), and for an elegant and readable early account, see Van Vleck (1932). It is discussed further in the conclusion, chapter 8.

ends in fact have to be read out of a pattern, and only larger patterns will sustain such attempts. Although any self-consistent field approach attempts to take great care with local context, it is at the cost of the subtle correlations that are central to actual process.

Structuralism,[15] by contrast to rational choice theory, disdains events, as when it explains the United States without the War between the States, and that war—the Civil War—without Gettysburg, and the Third French Republic without Louis Bonaparte's Eighteenth Brumaire. Structuralism thus takes control for granted and tries to explain away identity. Structuralism builds from the myth of society as some preexisting entity. Neither rationalist nor structuralist approaches can give proper account of social action.

Abandon structuralism, including Talcott Parsons's attempt to derive social order from values guiding individual persons, and also abandon the view common in economic theory of social order emerging from preexisting individuals' efforts to achieve their idiosyncratic wants and interests. In my opinion, neither of these two approaches to social theory, themselves opposites, take persons seriously. As a result, neither can treat historical trends and cultural impacts with proper sensitivity. In contrast, my theory aims not just to sidestep the "structure and agency" problem, but to build on grounds of concepts that eliminate that problem.

It is silly to treat rational choice theory as the basic or general theory of social organization. It is just as silly to carp at any particular approximations it uses, and then refer to the carping as an institutional theory. All theory is simplification; scientific theory simplifies so as to uncover new phenomena. Rational choice theory has suggested new phenomena, and the present task is to determine contexts in which it is likely to be productive. Chapter 4 develops theory to ground these ideas about personhood and rationality.

1.9. Control and Social Space: Scientific Precursors

Now I go on to develop a more general claim. I will draw on natural sciences for analogies to this claim. Start with weather forecasting. My first article, as just a teenager, published in the *Tech Engineering News* of MIT, was about the initial introduction of radar to survey storm clouds. I continued to follow the blossoming of meteorology and became convinced that a fresh perspective was as crucial there as new technology. Now I try to bring a fresh perspective to sociology, and

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[15] Whether in Parsons (1937) or Wallerstein (1980) or later forms.

encourage the reader to break out of some standard terminological frames in social science.

Social dynamics have peculiar features when compared with, say, chemical reactions. There is no single, unique, and isotropic space for context. The dynamics of control, while they are playing out, are also inducing and constructing their own "spaces." These accommodate possibilities of social action, which depend on perceptions and interpretations that must be communicated and are set only partly by the biophysical environment.

There are also similarities between social dynamics and chemical or other natural science reactions. Extension and shape get read by the analyst from observing mutual positionings. In both realms, positionings are pressured by jockeyings for control. There is spread across a field.

Topologies of social spaces are complex, varying over time and from one locale to another. Insights about a topology suggest leverages for control. For example, the military drill is one model of control, a model that subjects to caricature the preconditions and steps for control. In a drill, persons are induced to move in parallel within a little group which is both literally and metaphorically cut off from other social relations for a time. Alternatively, one can seek control from weaving a maze of uncoordinated and changing contexts around others. Chapter 7 develops these themes.

My general claim makes moves analogous to three moves made by physical science in supplanting Aristotle and his insistent common sense. The first key move was to divorce force from momentum so that unchanging momentum signifies no force. The commonsense reality of frictions is set aside in order to achieve analytic power. Coupled to that, the second move was abstracting from particular objects to universals, point masses, and the like. The analogous moves in sociology are to switching, as to momentum/force, and to identities as the actors.

The third key move was the later explicit development of Cartesian space, completely parameterized space, as the setting. This allowed physics problems to become formulated analytically, subject only to boundary conditions. The analogue being developed for social process is networks, a distinct new sort of friable, multidimensional space, with which a new and friable constitution of interpretive social time has to be interwoven.

Engineering disciplines also offer analogies. Implicit in Cartesianization was universal regularity of the time dimension, also found in engineering. Engineering need not imply predictable control. Perhaps closest to social science is chemical engineering, in which, it has always seemed to me, the highest art is just riding herd on enormously complex fluid flow processes.

1.10. Where to Go

An identity in a human being need not constitute person, despite being mirrored in the body and in the consciousness, in a mind. Minds fall outside the scope of sociology as I work it here.[16] And all sorts of identities are bound up with what "control" is in social surroundings. I expand on this in subsequent chapters around the following five theses.

Five Theses:
- Identities emerge from turbulence seeking control from within social footings that can mitigate uncertainty.
- Switchings are the vehicles of meaning for identity and control.
- Switching reckons in change both of social relations and of domain of association.
- Context gains in depth as identities embed into new levels.
- The fifth thesis is dual: context is constituted in and as patterns in dynamics across identities and control across levels for a situation.

I also expand on this in subsequent chapters around what become the following five senses of identity.

Five Senses of Identity:
- The **first** sense is identity as the smallest unit of analysis. Persons consist of a bundle of these identities. When this form of identity finds footing, one could replace the word *identity* with *position* in a netdom.
- The **second** sense is a connected bunch of the first-sense-identities. It exists only where first-sense-identities found footings and are thus object and subject of the attribution of meaning.
- The **third** sense is the trace of different identities in different netdoms. This identity is a report of, for example, a human being switching from netdom to netdom over time. It is the pathway a person, entity, or place takes through social time. If we could graphically sum up time as well as domain layers, we would see this third sense of identity.
- The **fourth** sense of identity is the interpretation of the third sense. If a person looks back on the netdoms and identities he switched into and out of and embeds this pathway in meaning, he produces the fourth sense of identity. This is what a person perceives to be his or her self—a narratively embedded history of a journey through different netdoms. If the third sense is, for example, the detailed account of the misfortunes of Oedipus's life story, the fourth sense is the realization

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[16] Niklas Luhmann's system theory (1995), which I see as compatible with mine, does treat consciousness but keeps it segregated (his chapter 7). I discuss this further in chapters 4 and 6, and then start chapter 8 on this issue.

that he failed. It's the fourth sense that leads a psychologist to label a certain mind disturbance the "Oedipus complex."

- I will argue that there is yet another, a **fifth**, sense of identity with very different scope. It is a dynamic, self-reproducing amalgam across profiles of switchings in the first four sorts of mismatch. This fifth kind is on a distinct level that analytically is still more embracing than the level of discipline. This fifth kind, I will argue in chapter 4, is the form in which persons are realized.

My aim is theory that enables observation, expert observation attentive to all scopes and levels. Social organization is messy and refractory, a shambles rather than a crystal (cf. Sorokin 1956). There is no tidy atom and no clear-cut world, only complex striations and long strings that reptate as in a polymer goo. So my account challenges commonsense constructs of person and of society in order to search out self-similarity of social organization, according to which much the same dynamic processes apply over and over again across different levels and scopes.

But any level and scope can be constrained, and otherwise influenced by, and thus embed into, as well as decouple from others. Language, as both vehicle and outcome, is central in this process.[17] From time to time, I draw on linguistics for support that goes beyond coding of particular case studies, and I intend to devote my next book to social construction of language.

The importance of identity and control and switchings as primitives of the theory is manifest, and this has an important corollary. Since they arise around irregularities and amid contentions, they prove less responsive to averages than they are to dispersions, that is, to spreads across locale and degree of social connections and timing. For example, how long you wait in a queue depends as much on the dispersions of arrivals and of servicing times as on their means. On a grander scale, the volume of product an industrial firm ships out depends especially on the quality rank seen by buyers among competing producers who are eying each other; it is dispersions across flows, not averages, that trigger levels in prices, costs, and profits that sustain a set of production volumes in dynamic equilibrium.[18]

To reach such results, I first lay out network analyses in chapter 2 followed by construction of three disciplines in chapter 3. Then in

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[17] For example, Hopper and Traugott (1993) argue this regarding grammaticalization, and Halliday (1994; and see Dejoia and Stenton 1980) has long argued this for language more generally.

[18] McPherson and Ranger-Moore (1991, p. 35) make a similar argument about sizes of organizations on the authority of Darwinian models of evolution: there in Hardy Weinberg equilibrium, the rate of change of fitness is equal to the genetic variance in fitness.

chapter 4 I jump to a conjecture on what sort of larger format survives as sensibility within stochastic social process. Chapter 5 illustrates what practices and institutions emerge, in some systems of implicit and explicit culture. Then chapter 6 turns to what regimes of control are able to establish themselves, with special cases of separate realms in law, economy, art, science, and even sports.

Chapter 7 is foil to all the prior chapters in laying out how to break through such formats sometimes to get fresh action. It may well be the most relevant chapter for those readers seeking to cut their way through the Sargasso Sea of conformity, which chapters 2–6 dissect.

This book draws on case studies, a hundred or so, diverse in scope and realm and period. Ragin and Becker (1992) organized a major discussion on issues in the use of case studies for social inquiry. I argued there that a case study concerns primarily either identity or explanation or control. Studies in the present manuscript conform to this classification, chapters 1 and 4 concerning identity, chapters 2 and 5 concerning explanation, and chapters 3 and 6 concerning control; chapter 7, however, crosscuts all three concerns.

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I offer guidance about what lies "under the hood" of a social vehicle, and I hope that sheer curiosity will bring in some readers, with still others searching for guidance on practice and policy. The concluding chapter will begin with an overview, and you may wish to consult that, as well as the prologue, as you move along in the seven chapters.

The argument is intricate, somewhat unconventional, introduces some new terminology, and draws some unfamiliar distinctions. This is for the purpose of providing flexible tools in a supple framing to assist very diverse observation. I hope to hear from you about what does and does not work for you.

One of my contributors (see table of contents for their names) suggests that you be sure to read chapter 8, maybe even early, because it gives such a good overview.