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ANTHONY BAK BUCCITELLI & CASEY R. SCHMITT

Everyday Practice and Tradition:
New Directions for Practice Theory
In Ethnology and Folkloristics

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Guest Editors

Anthony Bak Buccitelli & Casey R. Schmitt

CULTURAL ANALYSIS
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Everyday Practice and Tradition: New Directions for Practice Theory in Ethnology and Folkloristics

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While a practice orientation has arguably been at the core of fields like European ethnology for decades (Klein 2009, 10; see also discussion in Bronner 2012, 23), there has more recently been a great proliferation of work on the subject in a wide variety of humanities and humanistic social science fields, a “practice turn in contemporary theory” (Schatzki et al. 2001). To some extent, the increasing centrality of everyday practice in cultural scholarship has seemingly come at the expense of other theoretical orientations, most especially the theories of performance which have long been a mainstay in American folkloristics. Billy Ehn, Orvar Löfgren, and Richard Wilk, for example, have recently articulated a clear vision along these lines for cultural research on “everyday life”:

In much cultural research, there has been a preoccupation with the explicit: the visible and dramatic. Therefore we want to turn the gaze away from such front-stage activities and move backstage. Instead of beginning with issues or statements that are constantly voiced, we argue for the use of side entrances. By starting in the everyday, it is possible to find surprising connections between small matters and large issues. Seemingly trivial routines may hide important conflicts or carry strong moral messages...the subtle details of daily life still hold many secrets. (Ehn, Löfgren, and Wilk 2015, 1)

This notion of the trivial and mundane, what Löfgren and Ehn call the “non-event” (Löfgren and Ehn 2010), can be taken as standing in direct opposition to the heightened expressive context of performance, for which the “event” has been a key conceptual piece (Bronner 2012, 31)¹ Yet, though it may initially seem so, a turn toward practice in cultural scholarship need not necessarily entail a turn away from performance, but rather a reframing the concepts of performance and practice as compatible. Margry and Roodenburg, for example, have argued that both performance and historical approaches are crucial to the study of the everyday, concluding that performance “is not opposed to everyday practices” and leaves “latitude for the unexpected, for the generation of new practices and meanings” (Margry and Roodenburg 2007, 5; see also Bennis 2006).

This volume of *Cultural Analysis* forms a response to both the fluorescence of interest in establishing new directions for practice theory and the longstanding rift between practice and performance orientations. Its work is threefold. First, it will

continue recent efforts to systematically assess the state of practice theory in ethnology and folkloristics by Harris Berger and Giovanna Del Negro (2002; 2004), Peter Jan Margry and Herman Roodenburg (2007), and Simon Bronner (2012), among others.² Second, through an international and interdisciplinary dialogue, this volume seeks to close the historical gap between concepts of performance and practice in the works of ethnologists and folklorists. Finally, it offers a view of a diverse array of new avenues for practice-based research in ethnology and folkloristics.

To that end, Simon Bronner's historical overview and look to the future in his essay "Toward a Definition of Folklore in Practice" provides a perfect launching point for the volume. Defining folklore as "traditional knowledge drawn from or put into practice," Bronner seeks to create an over-arching practice-based framework that can link together practice, knowledge, and performance instances, as well as "an array of materials with similar dynamic qualities," which can be used to delimit the material of study for folkloristics (p. 22). Moreover, Bronner argues, this reconsideration of one of the central tenets of American folkloristics is especially pressing, given the rapidly shifting everyday communicative dynamics that have arisen from the widespread use of digital technologies. Noting that "[t]he use of technology channels communication in ways that are different from face-to-face interactions but nonetheless produces actions that are recognizable as traditional," Bronner concludes that a practice-based definition for the field can better account for cultural interactions in digital spaces, but also that "the idea of practice, rather than performance, does not negate applications in 'analog' and pre-industrial culture" (p. 18).

Taking on a different aspect of practice, Matthias Klückmann's "Practicing Community: Outline of a Praxeological Approach to the Feeling of We-ness" follows some like terrain. He argues that folklorists, European ethnologists, and other cultural analysts would benefit by understanding the nature of "community," an important if diffuse category in cultural scholarship, in terms of the practice of "we-ness." Drawing on the work of Theodore Schatzki and Etienne Wenger, Klückmann points out that while community, that feeling of "we-ness," exists only in practice, scholars must also be sensitive to the framing of action "in a world with presuppositions" (p. 43). Thought and action must be joined to systematically understand the way community is established, maintained, and changed.

Rachel V. González-Martin in her "Digitizing Cultural Economies: 'Personalization' and US Quinceañera Practice Online" takes a similar approach. Her study examines how digitized forms of knowledge and practice increasingly work hand-in-hand with offline cultural practices. Through a focus on practice rather than identity or authenticity, González-Martin argues, we can expose how the digitization of the culture of *quinceañera*, a US-Latinx coming-of-age celebration, challenges the communalist traditions associated with the celebration by placing them within a neoliberal economic framework. At the same time, she points out, it also repositions both Latina identity within traditional gender hierarchies and, more broadly, Latinx identity within American culture.

Following González-Martin's emphasis on the significance of digitized knowledge

and practice, Anthony Bak Buccitelli's essay "Hybrid Tactics and Locative Legends: Re-Reading de Certeau for the Future of Folkloristics" seeks to place with work of a single practice theorist, Michel de Certeau, in a new framework that can better account for folk practice in our current, highly-mediated cultural conditions. Buccitelli offers an in-depth consideration of de Certeau's scholarship on the history of folklore studies in France, arguing that an examination of his treatment of this history can usefully inform our understanding of his larger theoretical program. From this historiographic base, Buccitelli makes the case that, especially in a world increasingly layered with digital information, certain aspects of de Certeau's platform must be altered to account for newly emerged possibilities of joining the individual and social in the practice of everyday life.

Roma Chatterji, in her essay "Repetition, Improvisation, Tradition: Deleuzian Themes in the Folk Art of Bengal," offers a similar re-thinking of questions of practice in response to globalized media flows. Engaging Gilles Deleuze's work on repetition, Chatterji posits that in repetition we can locate a form of artistic agency that is "multiple and synthetic rather than autonomous and subjective" and embodied in "their practices rather than their finished artworks" (p. 100). In framing her study of *chitrakars*, traditional narrative performers who make use of painted scrolls in West Bengal, she seeks to chart a middle ground between the habitual learning model of folk craft and the autonomous novelty model characteristic of the modern art world.

Following up on the notion of aggregated repetition of vernacular action, Casey Schmitt argues in "The Tactical Trail: Sense of Place and Place of Practice, that individual repeated actions represent aggregate forms of resistance against (and, sometimes, support for) structures of power. Schmitt uses a case study of the practices of trail hikers to bring forth and analyze tactical actions that are synchronically isolated but diachronically linked through the repetition or aggregation of observable behaviors, narratives, and or durable traces of past actions on pathways. He argues that calling attention to "trailways as *doxa*" and to hiking practices as a folk response that both shapes and is shaped by these trailways will provide insight into the "relationship between humans and biophysical surroundings" in ways that can usefully inform efforts to create a sustainable ecology (p. 140).

The final article of the volume, Harris M. Berger and Giovanna P. Del Negro's "Reasonable Suspicion: Folklore, Practice, and the Reproduction of Institutions," turns one of the key elements of the foregoing discussion on its head. Rather than looking at folk practices as responses to institutional structures, Berger and Del Negro examine the role that folklore plays in the reproduction of institutions. Analyzing the legal and bureaucratic means by which modern organizations are established and legitimated, Berger and Del Negro call attention to the critical role that everyday folk practices of both workers and managers play in the production and reproduction of institutions.

Taken as a whole, the essays in this volume form a diverse yet, in many ways, cohesive statement about the central need for practice orientations in folklore, ethnology, and other cultural studies that can link together our understanding of the individual and social, synchronic and diachronic action, and marked performance

with everyday tactics. This need is only underlined by the increasingly blurriness that many of these articles highlight between the institutional and vernacular in the media-heavy cultural terrain of neoliberal capitalism.

Joining our article authors in signaling the need for new directions in practice theory in folklore and ethnology, Maria Schwertl's thoughtful debate essay offers the concept of "enactment" as a possible middle ground concept that can fuse many of the dichotomies discussed in the volume's articles. Similarly, Monique Scheer, in her thoughtful discussion of the volume as a whole usefully points out that we must consider not just the functioning of knowledge, cognition, or individual agency against a backdrop of structure, but also the "sensory, affective, and emotional dimension" of practice. She observes that "[t]he body as the medium for experience is produced by practice, making experience itself historically and culturally situated" (p. 179), and yet notes that the everyday cultural conditions created by the pervasive use of digital media calls for the question of how to analyze practice without "bodily co-presence" (p. 181). As Scheer's response also suggests, although engaging with issues of practice through a range of approaches and concepts, the editors and authors of *Everyday Practice and Tradition* are brought together in our shared desire to begin a new kind of conversation about practice theory and, more broadly, the conceptual bases of folkloristics and ethnology. We hope that this volume will form the basis for much future discussion.

Notes

- 1 As an example of how this opposition can be structured, Slavoj Žižek, amplifying the transcendent notion to its limit, has described an event as a moment of emergence in which we locate "a change of the very frame through which we perceive the world and engage it" (Žižek 2014, 12).
- 2 It should be noted that several contributors to this volume have long called for further attention to issues of practice in folkloristics. See Bronner 1986; 1988; Berger 1997; 1999; and Del Nergo and Berger 2001.

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Toward a Definition of Folklore in Practice

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My title is a reverent nod to Dan Ben-Amos's pivotal essay, "Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context" (1971), in which he famously proposed a definition of folklore as "artistic communication in small groups." I use it as a starting point to ask whether or not practice theory can inform a revised definition and concept of folklore, as necessitated by the advent of the twenty-first century digital age (Bronner 2012). Such a definition should go beyond folkloric behavior in digital communication and be applicable to a variety of cultural phenomena or "practices," including those not covered by Ben-Amos's definition. At the time it was published, his essay sparked discussion not only about the changing characteristics of folklore in a post-industrial world, but also about folklorists' need to have a distinctive definition of folklore for disciplinary identity. I hope my consideration of practice as a keyword of folkloristic and cultural analysis will renew thinking about the phenomena analysts observe to be folklore as well as the scholarly enterprise, or discipline, to which this information contributes. My stab at defining folklore at this time is not coincidental. I point out that we are in the midst of an auspicious time for this, as current social and technological factors at work are similar to those that prompted the definitional discourse around Ben-Amos's theoretical grounding of performance and contextual approaches. In both cases, signs point toward similar paradigm shifts.

To proceed, I first review the conditions and dialogues that prompted Ben-Amos and other folklorists to undergird their action-oriented study with a definition that would announce their analytical concerns for a transformative age. I reflect on the efficacy of Ben-Amos's definition for a rising discipline. I look at the span of time from the 1960s to the end of the century and move on to assess challenges the dawn of the twenty-first century presented to conducting cultural analysis of folklore as "artistic communication in small groups." In the concluding section, I propose a definition around the concept of *praxis*, growing out of Ben-Amos's concern for folklore as a process-oriented subject. I evaluate the ways that such a definition addresses those challenges, and I explore the ultimate philosophical implications of this move for a theory of mind in culture.

The Indefiniteness and Inertness of Folklore During the 1960s

As a point of departure, Ben-Amos's definition responded to a European ethnological precedent of conceptualizing folklore as a product of rooted or peasant communities (Erixon 1937; Dundes 1966). From the literary side, he addressed the text-based emphasis on survivals and literary treatment going back to the "Great Team" of Victorian British folklorists (Dorson 1968; Dundes 1969). However, rather than revising a definition from the ethnological or literary side, Ben-Amos suggested that

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folklorists of his generation needed to generate a distinctive conceptualization of their subject and professional enterprise. As Maria Leach's twenty-one different definitions of folklore in *Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legends* (1949) showed, there was hardly consensus on the scope of folklore or folklore studies by the mid-twentieth-century, although various keywords such as *tradition, oral, transmission, culture, and literature* frequently surfaced. Anthropological folklorists tended to underscore culture and transmission while literary scholars were naturally drawn to literature and orality. As the iconoclastic 1960s began, a probably less acknowledged, but nonetheless significant work is Åke Hulkrantz's eight "headings" of folklore definitions in *General Ethnological Concepts* (1960), in which he pointed to the common ground of tradition among different factions of folkloristic work. Ben-Amos's "context" at the time (according to what he calls his "personal narrative" of making his definitional essay) is the prompting of an innovative, cohesive definition suited to the rise of an independent, academic and degree-granting discipline (Ben-Amos 2014, 12).

With the development of the discipline during the 1960s, courses in folklore proliferated (Baker 1971; Baker 1978). Publishers became interested in folklore textbooks that called for a definition of the subject, and Ben-Amos reported that he had a textbook project, along with Alan Dundes in his *Study of Folklore* (1965) and Jan Harold Brunvand in *The Study of American Folklore* (1968). Ben-Amos noted that earlier in 1946, on the 100th anniversary of W. J. Thoms's definition of "lore" or learning "of the people," the definition had received re-examination but it had not resulted in a notable change of approach (see Herskovits 1946; Thompson 1951). Of significance to the first public unveiling of his definition in 1967 is the American Folklore Society's first meeting in the twentieth century outside the auspices of either the American Anthropological Association or the Modern Language Association, just the year before. With a spirit of independence in the air and a number of young, new folklore doctorates in attendance, Ben-Amos presented his definition as a rushed, last presentation on a panel with the broad rubric of "Oral and Written Literatures." Of the participants on the panel, he was the only one associated with a separate graduate program in folklore, and his definition addressed narrative process as the core of folklore for oral transmission. For Ben-Amos, his thinking was affected not only by his degree in folklore from Indiana University but his appointment to the graduate folklore program at the University of Pennsylvania (Ben-Amos's previous appointment at UCLA was in anthropology).

Thus Ben-Amos and other participants at the conference pondered the distinctiveness of folklore, not only as material but also as the focus of an emerging, hybridized discipline. As Ben-Amos recalls, American Folklore Society members were often split between English and anthropology departments and fretted over the "indefiniteness of folklore, or the inertness of the discipline that the term had initiated" (Ben-Amos 2014, 12; see also Foster 1953, 159). Earlier in the decade, American Folklore Society President Francis Lee Utley tried to find consensus by suggesting that the common denominators in Leach's twenty-one definitions were orality and tradition. Leaning toward the literary side of folklore, Utley (1961) offered a succinct definition of

“literature orally transmitted,” preceded a few years earlier by anthropologist William R. Bascom’s even more concise phrase “verbal art” (1955; see also Bauman, R. 1975). Yet this irritated the newly independent-minded students of folklife or “folk culture” who viewed the scope of the field more broadly to include ethnological concerns of social and material culture (Foster 1953; Glassie 1968; Yoder 1963). In the folklife perspective, many of the cultural phenomena they considered traditional were utilitarian practices rather than artistic oral performances.

Other, younger folklorists with degrees in folklore from American universities had also expressed discomfort with the “indefiniteness” of folklore in the few years before Ben-Amos’s (Ben-Amos 2014, 15). While teaching at the University of Texas, Roger Abrahams (who wrote a folkloristic dissertation at the University of Pennsylvania’s English department) posed an initial challenge by objectifying folklore as “a series of artifacts which obey culture’s general laws, those generated by the conflict of innovation and stability, and complicated by the interactions of different groups” (1963, 98). Abrahams proposed that folkloristic analysis accordingly focus on the processes and contexts that produce the artifacts of folklore. Also complaining of the divergent approaches of literature and anthropology, Abrahams suggested a convergence, a definition of folklore as “items of traditional performance which call attention to themselves because of their artifice,” or more succinctly “traditional activities” (1968, 145). Accordingly, “the full analysis of a tradition or genre,” he declared, “calls for study of the organizational elements of both items and performances” or in other words, the rhetorical use of folklore (1968, 145). His emphasis on tradition and the agency of tradition-bearers could be viewed as a reconciliation of folklore as oral and folklife as social-material phenomena.

Abrahams drew attention to performance to underscore the active, relevant uses of folklore in everyday life, but in doing so, narrowed the scope of materials that folklorists considered to contemporary verbal expressions. With a degree in folklore *and* folklife from the University of Pennsylvania in progress, Henry Glassie theorized that this concentration on orality and performance had an American background in contrast to a European orientation toward culture and repeated social, non-performative practices that are “culminations of culturally determined know-how,” such as plowing, building, and crafting (Glassie 1968, 5). With material folk culture in mind, Glassie offered a consensus view that “a folk thing is traditional and non-popular” and pointed out that this holds for the composition of new tales as well as the construction of a wagon (1968, 6). Although problematic for marking a hard and fast line between folk and popular, Glassie’s definition attempted to guide a study of oral and material forms characterized by continuity with the past, localized usage and association, and non-academic learning by imitation and demonstration.

Attracted to structuralism and intrigued by paremiologist Archer Taylor’s observation that folklore expresses analogic, or connotative, reasoning (1946, 104; see also Ben-Amos 2014, 14, who called it “associative thinking”), Elli-Kaija Kögäs, another recent folklore doctorate, applied her experience in the literary “Finnish method” of motif and type analysis and sought a keyword to represent a discipline as

well as a body of material. She wrote, "It must be possible to find the distinctive feature which shows its [folklore's] identification and which shows in what respect it differs from literature or anthropology" (1963, 84). For her, that feature was transmission, not as an end of study but as evidence of mind, which she argued is what folklorists should ultimately seek.

Alan Dundes agreed that a cognitive goal would help a discipline find explanations in the materials under study, but he criticized the criterion of transmission because while processes such as driving a tractor and brushing one's teeth are transmitted, they would not usually be recognized by folklorists as folklore (1965, 1-2). Dundes answered the question, "What is Folklore?" in his textbook *The Study of Folklore* by suggesting a "folk" rather than a "lore" oriented definition regarding traditions arising out of a folk group, "*any group of people whatsoever* who share at least one common factor" and "help the group have a sense of group identity" (1965, 2). One of the distinctions in this broad and flexible definition, Dundes asserted, was its difference as an "American concept," different from European notions of peasant or class-based definitions. In a complex, modern society, it could account for the emergence of repeated expressions or practices used folklorically within a family, locality, or occupation—or more temporary groups of friends, campmates, or music fans. Without the criterion of oral transmission, the definition also included the possibility of material traditions and mediation of items by technology. What it did not define, however, was the kind of emergent items considered to be folkloric. Dundes addressed this problem by inventorying folkloric genres, which the new items presumably resembled, but critics such as Elliott Oring found this approach still "indefinite" (Oring 1986, 2-4).

Oring criticized Dundes's idea of group as more relevant to North American situations than to a universal model of folklore because of their absence of a peasantry and ancient legacy upon which European concepts of folklore were built (Oring 1986, 2-4; see also Cocchiara 1971, 467-95). Hultkrantz, in his summary of European ideas on folklore, acknowledged that one of the approaches to folklore "that easily developed in Europe" was an understanding of "the total culture of the folk in contradistinction to the culture of the higher classes" (1960, 138). But he also identified two other "big groups of definitions on the subject": folklore as "cultural traditions" and as a form of "literature" linked to culture (1960, 138). Hultkrantz abstracted these tendencies as "the spiritual tradition of the folk, particularly oral tradition" (1960, 137). He derived this statement from delegates at a 1955 congress of folklorists in Arnhem, Netherlands. He contextualized the definition as separating their consideration of practices within living communities from what he called Thoms's "romantic" mid-nineteenth-century emphasis on strange, antiquated customs in the characterization of folklore as "the manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs etc. of the olden time" (Hultkrantz 1960, 135). Hultkrantz blamed the discrepancy between Thoms's original equation of folklore with old traditions and the European ethnological emphasis on functional interpretation of class-based groups as being "responsible for...the many divergences in definitions up to the present time, and the dubious relations between ethnology and folklore" (1960, 135).

According to Ben-Amos, the collective drive toward a definition during the 1960s had several purposes. One was to identify folklore in the modern world and another was to declare differences from other disciplines. Aware of his teacher Richard Dorson's campaign against "fakelore" (Dorson 1950; Dorson 1976), he thought another reason for redefining folklore at this juncture was to distinguish it from a spreading mass or popular culture, while at the same time making its analysis more social, scientific, or ethnographic. At the time, the folksong revival was taking hold and questions also arose about the authenticity of folk songs on radio airwaves and commercially produced concert stages (Dorson 1963, 434-39; Legman 1962). Ben-Amos reflected that, "the definition of folklore became a personal need rather than a task" (2014, 15). In the context of the turbulent 1960s, with the rise of counter-cultures and subcultural youth communities, Ben-Amos sought a new path that established, in his words, "a correspondence between the socio-cultural and the scholarly-analytical conceptions of folklore" (2014, 18). In other words, for a rising discipline, he wanted to find more connection between folklore in social reality and the way scholars analyzed the subject of folklore, primarily in the textual manner of the historic-geographic school.

Fresh from fieldwork on storytelling events in Nigeria, Ben-Amos viewed folklore as a special form of communication separated from everyday life. Particularly influenced by a special issue of *American Anthropologist* edited by John Gumperz and Dell Hymes and titled "The Ethnography of Communication" (1964), he adapted the keyword of communication to a view of folklore as performance (Ben-Amos 2014, 17). Although first met with resistance, his definition of "artistic communication in small groups" caught on as more folklorists representing a disciplinary perspective, particularly in the United States, embraced event-oriented analysis and developed ideas of folklore as performance (Ben-Amos 2014, 17). Yet the descriptive micro-functionalism of most performance analyses and the extreme localization of expressions, mostly oral, raised criticisms as to a lack of comparability between performative situations and limiting folklore's cultural phenomena to "verbal art." Without a structural or comparable basis, the idea of folklore as performance or "artistic communication" as applied in analysis served to contribute further to the indefiniteness of folklore.

Rethinking the Idea of Folklore and Tradition in the Digital Age

I contend that a similar confluence of factors compels folklorists to re-examine definitions that guide folkloristic analysis at this exigent moment. As Ben-Amos grasped the challenge of popular culture to the identification of folklore, folklorists face questions in the digital age about the influence of the Internet on the notion of "small groups." Whereas he self-critically questioned whether folklore existed in social reality, folklorists openly voice concern about folklore's applicability in virtual reality (Blank 2009; Blank 2012). If folklorists struggled to define themselves between anthropologists and literary scholars during the 1960s, arguably scholars with folkloristic identities now seek their place among a myriad of integrative studies such as cultural studies, women's studies, ethnic studies, and performance studies, all of which claim their own disciplinary locations. In addition, as the historic-geographic method of literary

analysis and the idea of “etic analysis” came under critical scrutiny, so has performance taken its hits for a narrowing of folkloristic analysis in addition to implying a lack of generalization and historicity for cultural phenomena (Bronner 2006; Dundes 2005). In practice, the definition of “artistic communication” led to detailed descriptions of expressive narrative style rather than explanations for an array of traditional activities or the thinking upon which they were based (Ben-Amos 1995; Bronner 2006). Although considered a significant aspect of folkloric transmission, performance in its limited use appeared problematic for building a general, inclusive theory of folklore.

Consequently, tradition as a keyword received fresh review in the early twenty-first century as a unifying concept in folklore (Blank and Howard 2013; Bronner 2000; Bronner 2011). However, scholars noted the ambiguity of tradition and the need to clarify its position for folkloric processes in contradistinction to art, literature, and history. Ben-Amos’s cohort was concerned about distinctive perspectives that mark folkloristics as an analytical study and folklore as a subject, so too were new complaints voiced about an “indefiniteness” of their subject and “inertness” in the discipline, even with tradition as a bedrock that covered oral and material “folkness.” Instead of concerns about folk versus popular culture and fakelore versus folklore, one reads anguish in the twenty-first century over differences between folklore and folklorism, and even folklore and the folkloresque (Foster and Tolbert 2015; Roginsky 2007; Šmidchens 1999).

One counter argument is that indefiniteness is a virtue. Roger Welsch (1968) protested Ben-Amos’s 1967 paper, for example, by maintaining that folklorists did not need a definition. He contended that a standard definition potentially restricted collecting material with arbitrary criteria. He warned that because of their compulsion to craft a lofty discipline taking its place beside English and anthropology, “folklorists seem to be possessed by some definitional demon” and should maintain their independence from conventional approaches (1968, 262).

Richard Bauman (1969) retorted that a definition was essential to outlining a guiding concept that allowed folklore to take its place as a discipline. Bauman emphasized behavior rather than mind and appreciated that Ben-Amos “contextualized” folklore studies as a science, particularly a social and behavioral science instead of, in his words, “drifting aimlessly along the stream of idle and idiosyncratic speculation” (1969, 170). Welsch brusquely replied that a definition for a diverse field like folklore studies sounded too much like “unanimity of thought,” and he preferred an open, humanistic attitude that allowed for the “inevitable diversity” of methodologies. In other words, if a folklorist studies it, it must be folklore. The implication of Welsch’s open door policy is that folklore is what folklorists want it to be, which creates the possible scenario that folklore is everything, and therefore nothing (Ben-Amos 1971, 10; Claus and Korom 1991, 31). Folklorists, then, provide little guidance to popular, and often pejorative or misunderstood, views of folklore as crude relics, falsehoods, and signs of backwardness.

I propose that *folk* is significant as a modifier of culture or learning or lore. Qualifying folklore as a special type of creation, learning, and practice creates the

possibility that folk evidence is distinctly available for cultural analysis versus other materials. If the categories of folk and popular culture, or a view of folk as non-popular, are meaningful, then some identifying characteristics or patterns need to be confirmed and tested. Therefore, definitions of folklore can be perceived as hypotheses to determine what Abrahams called “dynamic qualities” of both the material and its analysis (1968, 147). Folklorists evaluate cultural phenomena as they emerge or as they have been documented in the past in order to test whether they fall within the scope of a definition and can be useful to analyze cognitive, behavioral, and social processes. Ben-Amos’s application of context to the significance of defining folklore is similarly apt when he states that “the definition of folklore is not merely an analytical construct, depending upon arbitrary exclusion and inclusion of items; on the contrary, it has a cultural and social base” (1971, 10). For Ben-Amos, folklore “is a *definite* realistic, artistic, and communicative process” and there are definite “boundaries between folklore and nonfolklore” (1971, 10; emphasis added).

In the years since Ben-Amos’s definition of “artistic communication in small groups,” it has been vigorously debated, and even Ben-Amos appeared to argue against himself when he questioned its omission of tradition in an essay, “The Seven Strands of Tradition” (1984) (see also Ben-Amos 1979; Jones, S. 1979; Joyner 1975; Wilgus 1973). His original point, he reflected, was not that tradition was inconsequential, but that in response to other definitions, it was not the sole criterion (Ben-Amos 2014, 18). Nonetheless, it is not a stretch to say that “artistic communication in small groups” has stood as the main benchmark of folklore in North America for over forty years, particularly in a spate of folklore textbooks at the end of the twentieth century emphasizing the “dynamics of folklore” (see Sims and Stephens 2005; Toelken 1979; Webber 2015). Yet most textbooks in the twenty-first century evade the definitional issue or refer broadly to tradition and learning. *A Companion to Folklore* edited by Regina Bendix and Galit Hasan-Rokem (2012) gave no definition, but, in the lead essay, appeared to assume a social basis for the identification of folklore. Some textbooks of around the same time, such as *Living Folklore* (2011) by Martha Sims and Martine Stephens, also avoided definition by stating “folklore is many things, and it’s almost impossible to define succinctly,” though the authors take a stab at it anyway by emphasizing, as Jan Harold Brunvand and Richard Dorson before them, that “folklore is *informally* learned, *unofficial* knowledge about the world, ourselves, our communities, our beliefs, our cultures and our traditions, that is expressed creatively through words, music, customs, actions, behaviors and materials.” (2005, 8; emphasis added; see also Brunvand 1968; Dorson 1972).

They fall into the trap, outlined by Elliott Oring in the textbook *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres*, of a definition by inventory that is hardly a definition. Oring’s first sentence of chapter one is that a “precise definition presents a problem.” Like Welsh, Oring concludes that “definition is not really necessary” to “approach inquiry,” although he advocates for an orientation, that is, concepts that regularly inform folklorists in their research. Avoiding a flippant attitude of folklore is what folklorists do. Oring cites *communal, common, informal, marginal, personal, traditional, aesthetic*, and

ideological as such concepts (noticeably absent is “performance” and “context”), or I might characterize them as aspects, of cultural practices to which the folklorist is drawn. As Charlotte Burne, the British folklorist in *The Handbook of Folklore* way back in 1913 profoundly asserted, “[I]t is not the form of the plough which excites the attention of the folklorist, but the rites *practiced* by the ploughman when putting it into the soil; not the make of the net or the harpoon, but the taboos observed by the fisherman at sea: not the architecture of the bride or the dwelling, but the sacrifice which accompanies its erection and the social life of those who use it” (1913, 2; emphasis added). In this expression of the importance of practice, she had as a goal uncovering, in her words, human “psychology,” although arguably she did not extensively theorize the idea of “practice.” In her evolutionary thinking, the practitioners of folklore came early, were primitive, and did not progress, and yet she cited as precedent for this view the more general definition attributed to W.J. Thoms of folklore as “the learning of the people.” Actually Thoms wrote “lore of the people,” by which he meant the common folk, and it is significant that Burne, through the handbook, encouraged readers to give attention to folklore as learning, whether as vernacular knowledge or a social process (Thoms 1965, 5).

In American folkloristics, attention to learning is evident indirectly through the characteristic repeatability of folklore. In their textbook *Folkloristics* (1999), Robert Georges and Michael Owen Jones emphasized an orientation involving repetition of expressive forms, processes, and behaviors apparent in (1) face-to-face interactions, and (2) judged to be traditional. Taking technologically mediated folklore such as photocopied humor into account, Alan Dundes moved from the folk group as the basis of folklore to emphasizing multiple existence and variation as folklore’s dynamic qualities. Georges and Jones extend this defining idea of folk practice as repetitive patterns in their assertion that folklore represents “continuities and consistencies through time and space in human knowledge, thought, belief, and feeling” (1999, 1). Their mention of knowledge is distinctive, and I think critical, for moving forward, because of the connection of their definition to the principle that folklore is significant to study, because it is “an integral and vital part of our daily lives,” rather than separated into novel or occasional special performances (1999, 2). I believe their connotation of knowledge is of quotidian or vernacular know-how or content, although it is also possible to dig deeper to their additional mention of thought, belief, and feeling to a cognitive meaning of mental and emotional states.

Applying Ben-Amos’s assertion of definition as having a social and cultural basis, it might be said that the nature of knowledge in a digital age changed thinking about face-to-face interaction and the kinds of transmission recognizable as folklore in relation to mediated culture. “Context” as used by Ben-Amos referred typically to face-to-face gatherings of people in which expressive behavior could be observed, whether in tribal storytelling events in Nigeria or teen slumber parties in North America.

At least five “challenges” have emerged to contextual definitions in the digital age that force, if not another paradigm shift, then at least an adjustment that encourages explanations on an array of practices as well as processes perceived to be “folk.”

1. First, there is the consideration of digital culture and its “analytical” characteristic. That is, it is based upon variable repetition rather than a social “relational” core, characteristic of what has been called analog culture. With so much made of the social base of folklore, digital culture provides a challenge to the idea of folklore arising out of “face-to-face interaction.” The case for its mediated expressions goes back before the digital age. In Alan Dundes and Carl Pagter’s case, they labeled photocopied humor as folklore because of their repetition and variation. This view opened the door for other mediated forms created by “users” such as digitally altered photographs, so-called memes, vernacular animations, and virus hoaxes (Blank 2012; Ellis 2015).
2. Second is re-examination of tradition as the keyword of folklore in works such as *Tradition in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Rob Howard and Trevor Blank (2013). Whereas tradition was noticeably absent in earlier contextual definitions, because it supposedly did not account for the emergence of forms and the styles of performance, tradition is re-conceptualized as a mode of thought with reference to precedent action that allows for human agency, rather than historical authority (see Bronner 2011; Jones, M. 2000). The use of tradition has also brought material and social practices into consideration, or what Kongas (1963) called mentifacts, under the umbrella of folklore as something individually created, often routinely. The reduction of folklore to verbal art, literature orally transmitted, or performance commonly excludes this material.
3. Third, is more of a call for finding cognitive sources for the production of folklore, rather than leaving it to surface behavioral descriptions of social interaction-based outcomes. Logically, the emphasis on “artistic communication” as performance has not explained action; it has contextualized an occasional form of it (Ben-Amos 1995; Bronner 2006). But more work is needed to get at the question of why people repeat themselves and frame activities as vernacular practices, particularly in modern societies that value the novel and unprecedented (see Abrahams 2005). More data are needed on the patterning and organization of everyday life, and on folklore as a cognitive process, or *praxis*, of organizing experience (Bronner 2011).
4. Fourth, maybe most profoundly, is the idea of dropping the group requirement of folklore, presented by Jay Mechling (2006) as “solo folklore” and Michael Owen Jones (2000) as “symbolic construction of self.” What Mechling and Jones both imply, perhaps radically, is that one does not need people in the plural to possess and produce folklore. Individuals by themselves or within organizations can propagate, adapt, and manipulate folkloric ideas (Jones, M. 1996).
5. Finally, there is the so-called “practice turn” in contemporary philosophy defined by Theodore Schatzki in 2001 as attention to “arrays of activity,” and

particularly important for the practice-oriented folklorist, the explanation of “skills, or tacit knowledges and presuppositions, that underpin everyday and ceremonial activities” and the constructed “cognitive frames” that direct, embody, and contextualize these activities as something expressive and cultural (2001, 2). To be sure, there is not a unified practice theory, but there is consensus on a need to shift the collectivist thinking of the past to “practical reasoning,” that is, a philosophical concept of framing action as purposeful and connotative experience arising from analogic, symbolic reasoning (Bauman, Z. 1999; Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu 1990; Bourdieu 1998; Bronner 1986; Bronner 1998, 469-73; Schatzki 1996).

A Definition of Folklore in Practice

Based upon these challenges, I submit a practice-centered definition that retains a consideration of context to account for the processes associated with the folkloric expression, but focuses attention to the knowledge domain, or cognition, at the basis of the production of tradition. I invite your contemplation on the way that the following identifies “arrays of activity” that benefit from analysis as folklore and equally guides the activity’s (and the array in which it is a part as well as the human agents for whom it is significant) explanation: “*traditional knowledge put into, and drawing from, practice.*”

By emphasizing activity or practice, the analyst connects repeated action across oral, social, and material forms. Some folklorists who are concerned for folklore’s artistic or performative aspect might question the absence of “artistic communication” as a criterion. However, I introduce a broader conceptualization of folklore’s significance as cultural phenomena in relation to popular and elitist forms in terms of phemic processes identified by sociolinguists. The definition of practice begins with the identification of knowledge gained or learned typically from phemic (i.e., stylized, culturally situated, or expressive) processes of repeated, perlocutional communication in visual, oral and written means as well as imitation and demonstration (often for social and material traditions) (see Austin 1968; Bronner 2016).

Let me explain my use of “phemic” as an additional qualifier to folklore’s characteristic of variable repetition because it is critical, I maintain, to a theory of folk practice as evidence of mind. Many utilitarian practices that are socially or geographically situated such as craft, medicine, and agriculture would not be perceived as art, performance, fantasy, or play and yet are viewed as noticeable traditions by virtue of their repetition through time and space. *Phemic* material denotes an implicative message that impels transmission, and the material becomes associated with the process of its transmission. Philosopher J.L. Austin approaches the analysis of these messages similarly to pragmatic gestures to account for the way they are *ordinarily used*, or transacted with others, to produce symbols and elucidate meaning (Austin 1961; Austin 1968; see also Warnock 1989). To be sure, folk practices can be artistic, such as the creative adaptation of a song or story, but what connects these practices to quotidian behaviors such as choosing a favorite seat and ritually arranging food on a plate is the implicative or phemic messages of activities as the outcomes of traditional

knowledge.

Linguist J. L. Austin's contribution to a theory of tradition based upon practice is to rubricate forms of transmission that result in actions (he called them "illocutionary acts") that people recognize as traditional. Austin calls the production of sound a *phone*, whereas a *pheme* is a repeated utterance with a definite sense of meaning (a subset of a *pheme* in his system is a *rheme* to refer to a sign that represents its object). Colloquially, the *pheme* may be said to "say something" that might be used on different occasions of utterance with a different sense (Warnock 1989, 120). The nuance to tradition as "regularities" that Austin introduces is that the illocutionary act is one performed *in saying something*; the locutionary act is one in the act *of saying something* while the perlocutionary act occurs *by saying something*. Indeed, the example in everyday life that Austinian philosopher John Searle uses to exemplify this distinction among the acts invokes the role of the hand as the response that signals a transaction and the occurrence of a tradition. The locution might be a query of whether salt is on the table and the illocution is of requesting it. The perlocution is causing someone to hand the container of salt over or "pass it" (Searle 1969, 53). The frames or traditions governing the transaction are often unstated and learned by participation in cultural scenes or regular responses to what Searle calls "the presence of certain stimuli" or "intentional behavior" (1969, 53; see also Cothran 1973).

The term *pheme* comes from the goddess Pheme of Greek mythology who personified renown and was characterized by the spreading of rumors. Symbolically important to the idea of folklore as phemic is her status as a daughter of the earth and one of the mightiest, if not the most elegant or beautiful, of the goddesses (Burr 1994, 231). She had a proclivity to repeat what she learned for better or worse (in art, she is often depicted with multiple tongues, eyes, and ears or with a trumpet broadcasting messages), to the point that it became common knowledge. Along the way, though, the information had varied greatly and was often made larger or stylized in proportion to the original bit of news. Pheme did not fabricate knowledge; her skill was in framing material in such a way that it would be passed around in ways that drew attention to itself or formed localized versions. She was a relay station of sorts, serving as both recipient and transmitter of earthy material that, being shared from person to person, became aestheticized, elaborated, and localized. The knowledge transmitted was known as much for the process it went through as for its content; in its expressive forms, it carried a message, often symbolized, or connotative. The process became manifested as a recognizable, differentiated practice, so a story was conveyed within the expectations of storytelling, or cultivating crops became identified, and potentially symbolized, as plowing in a certain fashion for a particular place or people. Because a message, action, or gesture was subjected to this verbal and non-verbal transmittal process associated with earthy rumor, the content invited evaluation as to its truth and value. In its "larger" form, the material raised questions about its sources and its combinations and reconfigurations, forming a whole with multiple connotative layers created along the path of transmission.

Phemic transmission can be distinguished from *phatic* communication in what

anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski characterized as a “type of speech in which ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words” (Laver 1975, 215; see also Warnock 1989, 120-22). As action, *phatic* speech corresponds to the routine intended, according to linguist John Lyons, “to establish and maintain a feeling of social solidarity and well-being” (1968, 417). Tradition often serves this social function as well, but it is distinguished as purposeful activity with a repeatable, multi-layered message that can be called *phemic*, because it compels “handing down/over” and variation in the long term by means of social interaction. Saying the greeting “How are you?” might appear routine/*phatic* (characterized with the folk term of “small talk”), but the responses of “Hunky dory,” “Just ducky (peachy, dandy),” “Fair to middling, mostly middling,” “Couldn’t be better,” “Can’t complain,” “Still among the living,” “Still breathing (standing, living),” “Fine as a frog’s hair,” “Fine as a frog’s hair and twice as fuzzy,” “Not dead yet,” and “Old enough to know better, And you?” often ritually signal a special connection between the speakers/texters. Further, the practice contextualizes *phemic* or connotative meanings characteristic of a folkloric frame of action (such as references to aging, anxiety / “troubles,” lifestyle choices, medical inquiries, friendship or family relations, and insider, localized knowledge) (see Coupland, Coupland, and Robinson 1992; Coupland, Robinson, and Coupland 1994; Rings 1994; Wright 1989).

The action of producing or transmitted “lore” is perceived or constructed as traditional, characteristically through its repetition and variation, and connotative evocation of precedent. It can be viewed as distinct from, although, sometimes integrated into, the notion of popular culture as fixed in form and commercialized (folklore can also be “popular” and broad-based beyond the small group or subculture). Reference to the actions of “put into and drawing from” suggests the framing of connotative, purposeful enactments as an adaptation from precedent or an outcome of repeatable behavior. This outcome can be material and social as well as verbal. It can be created by and enacted for the individual.

Think for a moment of the practice of hitting one’s head with the palm of the hand and saying, “What was I thinking?” The words alone might be rendered literally but rhetorically framed in action and intent as folklore. The symbolic gesture in words and action that are recognized from precedent carry meaning, usually of having made a preventable mistake. The person hits the head to indicate that the brain was not working correctly, much as one might in fact, hit a machine to get the gears moving. The interrogative phrase might not even be heard by another person, but it constitutes a framed, stylized, repeatable, variable action along with an uttered text that is based on precedent, even if it is individualized. It can be visualized on the Internet and sent to a friend who probably recognizes the reference to tradition. It might be used in popular culture by writers and filmmakers, but they use “folklore” rhetorically whereas individuals hitting their foreheads with their hands are enacting, or practicing, the lore.

Even without the utterance, the gesture of hitting one’s head could be construed as a signal of consternation. Combining the gesture towards the thinking “head” with the line, “What was I thinking?” and, typically, facial gestures of dismay, persons

symbolize the precarious connection of their reasoning to action. The utterance could be varied with the insertion of a swear word or a metonymic phrase such as “What the hell (fuck, crap)?” or clipped as “What the?” In the absence of people witnessing the gesture, the practice based upon traditional knowledge connotes motivations occurring in various circumstances or contexts that merit explanation. Indeed, the agent’s account of the practice might be insufficient explanation, because persons might not be fully cognizant of their reasons for saying or doing what they did. The analyst therefore strives to discern what people are thinking from the practices they frame and explain in a range of possible behaviors why they do what they do.

***Praxis* as an Answer to Analytical Challenges**

By way of conclusion, and I hope further dialogue and test my definitional hypothesis, I will revisit the five challenges I previously mentioned to view how a practice-centered definition addresses concerns and shapes analysis. Concerning the challenge of digital culture, the rhetorical use of practice as a repeatable, variable activity suggests that speaking is not the only form of expressive activity made traditional by individual agency. The use of technology channels communication in ways that are different from face-to-face interactions but nonetheless produces actions that are recognizable as traditional. The actions of forwarding, replying, and photoshopping are part of the process that give these technologically mediated messages and images dynamic qualities that can be called folk. Yet the idea of practice, rather than performance, does not negate applications in “analog” and pre-industrial culture, for folklorists can study reasons for why people repeat themselves beyond the supposed forces of tradition or isolation. The identification of practice presumes a comparability of forms and contexts that allows for analytical operations without sacrificing attention to process.

The second challenge was the reconfiguration of tradition for a modern context. Tradition in practice theory has both an emic and etic dimension. Folklorists should note the ways that people invoke, and evoke, tradition as a term as well as a force in their lives. Indeed, the invocation of phrases such as “It’s a tradition in my family,” “Here’s a traditional dish,” or “For tradition’s sake” are themselves phemic practices that carry metafolkloric implications. Although I noted that folklorists working with contemporary materials use tradition to represent a mode of thought rather than a historical authority, one can trace different manifestations, and sometimes conflicts, of tradition within communities. From an analytical vantage point, folklorists in a practice orientation are concerned with the often individualized permutations of traditional knowledge in repeatable, variable practices, or folklorists trace the thinking (i.e., analogical, associative, and symbolic reasoning) behind the formation of traditional knowledge back from practices.

The identification of *praxis* as a basis of practice-oriented methodology addresses the fourth challenge of finding sources and explanation for what people do. Indeed, Zygmunt Bauman (1999) characterizes the symbolic quality of connotative, repeatable action, or *praxis*, in custom and tradition as the heart of what we come to know as culture and its influences. To explain the analytical purpose of *praxis*, I need to distinguish the

use of practice as a traditionalized genre in the Latin sense of *traditum* (and therefore a reference for custom, item, or version in folkloristic rhetoric of cultural practice”) versus the theoretical orientation of practice as a perspective and process (*tradio*). A prominent way that this distinction has been made is to use the Greek root of practice, *praxis*. Unlike the bifurcation of action into performance and everyday, the basis for *praxis* is a trichotomy, with Aristotle’s categories of knowledge resulting from activities of *theoria* (knowing for its own sake or intellectual processes that result in truth), *poiesis* (in which the end goal is production, such as building a house or writing a play), and *praxis* that results in actions accomplished in a particular way (e.g., organizing, speaking, celebrating, making) and therefore connoting or symbolizing the meaning of its action. A parade, for example, is recognizable as an organization of walking, and within this framed, stylized activity, it takes on the meaning of celebration. Often associated with the production of noise, a parade in silence displays a distinctive *praxis* and takes on a different meaning as protest, often with the connotation that the surrounding society is conflicted or “sick” (Margry 2011). Even if one does not perform the silence, or gives a eulogy at a memorial service, it might be said that one participated in a practice because he or she “went” and therefore shared in a cultural meaning within the framed action.

The binary of *praxis* and *theoria* is often constructed in the philosophy of science to differentiate what scholars do from the ideas they contemplate, but that does not mean that *praxis* does not have a psychological or ideational component as *praxis* is concerned with activities predominant in ethical and political life. Thus philosopher Richard Bernstein writes, “A person with this characteristically contemporary sense of ‘practical’ in mind may be initially perplexed when he realizes that what we now call “practical” has little to do with what Aristotle intended by ‘praxis’” (1971, x). In emphasizing the actions of individuals’ free will as *praxis*, Aristotle opened inquiry into the way that decisions are made about activities in diverse, everyday life situations in interaction with others and within the context of the *polis*, the traditions and rules imposed by or perceived in a society. Following attention to practice, one can identify many methodological applications of *praxis* that appear quite different but owe essentially to the Aristotelian distinction of *praxis* as meaning arising from doing as a social and ethical act. To get at the folkloristic implication, I will employ the *praxis* of sorting through the top five.

First, we address the concern for “usages” in English or “Brauch” in German as a trend in European ethnology and folklife studies. It subsumed oral traditions or verbal art under social and material practices and set them in the context of community. Of folkloristic import is that *praxis* in this view necessitates studying others to know what works in a situation that is often defined by residence, for the end itself is only specified in deliberating about the means appropriate to a particular setting. In Hultkrantz’s *General Ethnological Concepts* (1960), this use of practice underscores the importance of repetition with reference to the past. Custom is distinguished by its sanctioning force and is more normative. In addition, unlike habit, practice encompasses custom and usage presupposes tradition. One might argue that American folkloristics is not

usually concerned with these distinctions, especially in relation to issues of authority imposed by tradition and particularly not within communities that may be class or geographically bound. The European intellectual heritage of *Volkskunde* or ethnology has been to divide practice into cultural and behavioral patterns, with the former being within the purview of the folklorist who uncovers the sources and functions of repeated actions perceived as traditional. It therefore does not invoke the dramaturgical metaphor of performances or arts, but instead constructs tradition around the idea of activity within the course of life. More than other definitions, Georges and Jones's categorization of folklore as behaviors "based on known precedents and models" and that "customarily learn, teach, and utilize or display during face-to-face interactions" appears to follow this approach, especially when they divide actions of people "as we interact with each other on a daily basis" into practices denoted as folklore or activities that are "readily distinguishable, often [in] symbolic ways" (1999, 1). Toward the advancement of a discipline, this statement suggests that activities are comparable, and generalizations about the relation of practices to one another, across time and space, are possible. The *praxis* of the folklorist is to engage in fieldwork as an action comparable to custom; the activity captures and in some regard, constructs, the enactment of culture.

From this first sense of *praxis*, a question arises about what is to be analyzed in enactments of culture. The French sociologist Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) argues for identifying the rules of operation in daily life, which he dichotomizes into practices of making and using. Advocating for a structuralism of cultural behavior, he declares, "There must be a logic of these practices" (de Certeau 1984, xv). Folk culture can be read in the reference to "local stabilities," which he argues, "break down... no longer fixed by a circumscribed community" (1984, xx). Folklorists might infer from de Certeau, that folklore is a form of marginalized cultural production that, in his words, is "massive and pervasive" (1984, xvii). With its special purview, another significant place for folkloristics is in the logics (construed as a process in the sense of *tradio* differentiated from *tradio*) that communities devise for themselves. Inasmuch as logic suggests constraints as well as form for improvisation and variation, they invite analyses of power because one set of rules may be in conflict with another as local stabilities come up against dominant systems.

One can read this Marxian basis in the use of *praxis* by Pierre Bourdieu in the proposition that people who impose "practical taxonomy" wield power. In this view, the cultural activity of naming, categorizing, and organizing is critical to shaping worldview, and analysts need to consider the way that they respond to, as well as enact, the typically invisible, constructed structures of culture. Bourdieu's *praxis* relates to performance because of the emphasis on an actor's understanding of engagement with the world. Thus cultural theory supposedly moves away from the study of rules and to the analysis of practice. From fieldwork in Algeria and France, he adopted terms to further the relation of rules to practice. The *doxa* are aspects of the society's norms and values that are not discussed or challenged because they are deeply rooted through socialization and taken for granted. *Habitus*, relating to usage, are normative aspects

of behavior or dispositions that are acquired through socialization, but are produced unreflectively rather than totally unconsciously. In Bourdieu's theory, practice is based on the dispositions inherent in habitus and takes the form of strategic improvisations, goals, and interests pursued as strategies, against a background of *doxa* that ultimately limits them. Unlike the ethnological application of usage as practice, though, Bourdieu disavows rational choice and implies that socialization guides behavior. To be sure, performance-oriented folkloristics has embraced some of Bourdieu's ideas about the inequality of power in particular "social fields," but has been open to the charge leveled against Bourdieu of a functionalist tautology in which the consequences of action are mistaken for their causes. Bourdieu's *praxis* relates to Goffman's social interactionism (1967) and Geertz's "interpretive anthropology" (1973) in interpreting bounded events as texts of social structure. Instead of describing processes of *praxis*, critics have sought a psychological praxeology by which, in the words of Gunnar Skirbekk, author of *Praxeology*, "human activities are interwoven with their agents and with the things at which they are directed within our everyday world" (1983, 9).

That is, in response to the post-structuralist lack, or avoidance, of explanation as arbitrary and uncertain, inquiry into *praxis* allows for consideration of the symbolic ways that activities are expressive and can be traced to sources in cognition. I would characterize Alan Dundes's "modern" definition of folklore as socially sanctioned expression that can be semiotically and cognitively explained fits into this praxeological perspective, even if one did not follow his Freudian analysis (Bronner 2008). The psychological processes of projection and projective inversion he suggested along with Gregory Bateson's idea of "play frames" are important examples of identifying cognition representative of "traditional knowledge drawn from or put into practice" (Bateson 1972; Dundes 1976; see also Briggs 2015; Bronner 2010; Mechling 2008; Wallis and Mechling 2015).

This praxeological idea of explanation in cognition for behavior that composes the third analytical challenge is based on the psychology guiding repetition of customs to manage social relations. The fourth challenge owes more to the individual construction of self as a cultural *praxis*. Although some critics might view the examples by Mechling and Jones of individualized "traditions" as anomalous, they represent a broader expectation in modern societies that individuals create an identity out of many cultural options and demonstrate this identity in practices that might only be known to the individual. The individualized use of *praxis* by Mechling, Abrahams, and Jones anticipates social philosopher Zygmunt Bauman's idea of culture arising from the mediation of tradition and creativity, but is distinguished by a behavioral component. Folklorists want to know how tradition is expressed and how people behave when it is enacted. Jones, Mechling, and Abrahams go further in suggesting certain actions, such as "organizing," "playing," and "speaking" as pivotal and aesthetic activities that underlie rather than divide everyday life or has it has been conceptualized recently, "public culture" (Abrahams 2005; Jones, M. 1987; Mechling 2008; Mechling 2009). They have been reflective on pragmatism as a philosophy, particularly the work of William James in *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), in

which he explores the instrumental functions that beliefs bring to one's life rather than dismissing them as irrational. In 1985, when introducing a special section of *Western Folklore*, "William James and the Philosophical Foundations for the Study of Everyday Life," Mechling underscored that folklorists have a special role in a modern practice theory, because, "The folklorist brings to the interpretive approach the additional insight that practical reason is 'artlike,' that we are studying not 'mere' discourse but stylized communication that is often as expressive as it is instrumental. In fact, despite some careless lapses, folklorists have tended to see the 'consummatory experience' as being both expressive and instrumental, rejecting again the Cartesian dualism" (1985, 303-4). At the same time, Mechling complains that folklorists, as pragmatists, have not sufficiently sought a philosophical basis for their discipline. By his account, what is necessary is not an accounting of performative acts but their basis in mind and belief.

For my part, in shaping my perspective on *praxis*, I have looked to another pragmatist, George Herbert Mead, for more specifically proposing that a social act rather than social interaction is the central symbol that pairs divergent attitudes within a situation. He emphasized that the most complex intellectual processes "come back to the things we do." Although Mead was often accused of being ahistorical, I have tried to show in *Grasping Things* (1986) to *Folklore: The Basics* (2016) the significance of historical as well as cultural contexts for the perceptions of actions as symbolic by different participants often at odds with one another in social scenes, whether at a pigeon shoot, football game or presentation of a carved chain. Its generalization for folkloristics, taking into account the intellectual heritage of folkloristics in identity, expression, and representation, is to suggest analytic purpose in uncovering the repetition of individual acts involving taking the attitude of the other, the formation of significant symbols, dynamic qualities, and rhetorical agency.

Philosophically, as evident in the fifth analytical challenge of practice as a key to the conduct of everyday life in modern settings, folklore's significance in the study of repeatable practices—stylized, ritualized, and often organized—that people deem traditional, connotative, and meaningful is its evidence of the thinking that goes into the formation of culture on various levels from the individual to the nation. The manifestation of folk practice individually and socially indicates that humans have a psychological need for tradition and reshape traditions constantly in negotiation with various cultural forces (Bronner 1992; Bronner 2011, 1-62). The definition of "traditional knowledge drawn from or put into practice" not only serves to identify the cyclical link between thought and action in the organization of culture—folk, popular, and elite as well analog and digital—but also encompasses an array of materials with similar dynamic qualities. As many of us have learned, the more we practice the luckier, or more folkloric, we get.

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Practicing Community: Outline of a Praxeological Approach to the Feeling of We-ness

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Abstract

Community, once a backbone of the social sciences as well as the study of folklore, has lost its status as a framing concept. My aim in this article is to argue for the analytical value of community for the study of expressive culture and the everyday. Based on assumptions of practice theory, especially the work of Theodore R. Schatzki, I propose to understand community as a feeling of we-ness that evolves and transpires through bundles of practices and arrangements among participants of these practices. The praxeological perspective allows comparing communities of different types in order to gain general insights into aspects of boundaries as well as spatial and temporal orders of communities.

Music played in the distance. I entered the district through a leafy graveyard. It was a hot summer day and immediately I missed the shadow I had been enjoying for the last few minutes. The streets around me—with their brick stone buildings, their small shops, bars and cafés on the main street, the allotments, the church and the school in the near distance—make up a small neighborhood in Stuttgart, a city in the southwest of Germany. The neighborhood is part of my fieldwork; the fieldwork is part of my research on the feeling of home and diversity in multi-ethnic neighborhoods. The neighborhood is commonly called Nordbahnhofviertel—literally translated ‘North Station Quarter’.¹ It was built for railroad employees toward the end of the nineteenth century, in conjunction with a newly constructed freight station. At the beginning, the district was still located outside of the city boundaries, and it was built exclusively to accommodate railroad workers. Up to the beginning of the twentieth century, these were mainly people from the rural lower class, who were mainly Catholic, in contrast to Stuttgart’s Protestant population. This, and the location on the periphery of Stuttgart, meant that in comparison with the rest of Stuttgart, a socially homogeneous district separate from the (Stuttgart) community arose. After the Second World War large numbers of people moved into the district from the neighboring state of Bavaria. However, the federal railroad company increasingly hired foreign workers during the 1960s to cope with the labor shortage in the post-war period.² The immigrants were initially housed in three railroad residential homes on the edge of the district, but during the 1970s they started moving into apartments in the district itself. This was possible because many of the district’s inhabitants had started to leave toward the end of the 1960s due to the poor standard of accommodation. More than 60

percent of the 4301 people living in the district today have an immigrant background.³ The largest group among them consists of individuals with Turkish origins.⁴

The first thing people told me when I introduced myself to residents, politicians, and social workers was that I should come to the annual street festival. I was told that the street festival was the perfect opportunity to get to know a lot of people and to get an impression of the community. So I followed one of the streets that led to the main street and wound down a small hill. Walking along the street I heard the music grow louder and at the end of the street I saw a small group of stalls. They were set up in the open area in front of the social worker center. The center has organized the street festival for over 30 years. It has been called *International Street Festival* to reflect the changes the district has gone through by means of immigration since the 1950s.⁵ The street festival is intended to provide a platform for different (immigration) associations, enabling them to present themselves and their work. Aside from selling foods and drinks at the respective stalls they put on stage performances. The nationality represented by the stall near the entrance to the festival is readily identified by the large Portuguese flag beside it. Viewed from the entrance, the stalls formed a semi-circle opposite a stage. Between the stage and the stalls there were rows of benches and tables. In the background, a DJ played taped music. I walked along the stalls. Each of them represented a different country. Not every stall was identifiable by a flag; some could be identified by the language of the menu and the types of food on offer: pizza from the Italians, tea and Gözleme from the Turkish, steak and sausages from the German allotment association.

Almost immediately, I thought of the World's Fair where every nation presents itself in a clear and distinct manner. And indeed, the observation that each nationality tends to remain separate is a repeated feature of description of the *International Street Festival*. This assessment of a common, but nationally separated form of coexistence is a basic perception in the district. In various following discussions with the district's residents, the street festival would often be taken as a starting-point for talking about community and coexistence. Later Erwin Neuer,⁶ a resident and one of my interlocutors, for example, would emphasize that while it is nice for everyone to get together, everyone eventually ends up sitting at individual tables according to nationality:

Germans are sitting at one of the tables, and at the other table there is sitting that group and at another table a third group. You won't see Germans, Italians and Turks sitting at one table together. And every group has its own folkloristic performance. I like those but again, unfortunately, every group remains for itself. (Neuer [pseud.] 2010)

For Paolo Vernandez, another resident, this separation is above all evident in behavior. He described the festival to me in the following manner: "If you are an Italian, you go there and eat pizza and everything from Italy, for example, and when the Turkish group goes on stage, all the Turks will get up to dance" (Vernandez [pseud.] 2009). In our later conversation, Vernandez described belonging as expressed by means of participating, by joining specific collective activities.

"Acting in common makes community," Dorothy Noyes wrote around twenty

years ago in an article in *The Journal of American Folklore* (Noyes 1995, 468). Her article was part of a special issue on keywords for the study of expressive culture wherein she states that community emerges in performance. I agree with that idea. However, I conceptualize community as practiced and in doing so part ways with Noyes' approach. Community is an important idea that structures people's everyday life, as for instance the residents' comments above have shown. What is more, *community* can be a valuable analytical concept.⁷ For different reasons, which I will discuss later on, community has functioned as a descriptive rather than an analytical term within the study of folklore.⁸ My aim in this article is to show that *community* as a concept in the study of expressive culture offers a possibility to understand processes of boundary making as well as temporal and spatial orders of different communities in a better way than other related terms, such as "group". Motivated by practice theory, this article sets out to provide a more precise concept of *community* for the study of expressive culture. I will develop *community* as a feeling of we-ness that evolves and transpires through bundles of practices and arrangements among participants of these practices.⁹

I will develop my argument in the following three sections. First, I briefly summarize different ideas and understandings of community in the social sciences. Second, I abstract the main assumptions of practice theory and discuss a definition of practice based primarily on the work of Theodore R. Schatzki. Finally, I promote *community* as an analytical concept. Taking the work of Etienne Wenger as a starting point and my own fieldwork example of the *International Street Festival* introduced above, I sketch out research questions, advantages, and empirical implications.

Community: A Matter of Commonality

Going through my field notes I wonder how one analytical concept might be able to integrate all the different notions of community I came across at the street festival and in discussions about it afterwards. To understand and to structure their everyday life, the residents use the concept of community. It describes and expresses differences between Italians and Turks. It distinguishes inhabitants of the neighborhood from people living elsewhere, immigrants from autochthones and people taking part in community activities from those who do not. By what means is it possible to approach these everyday notions of community? Is there one community divided into several sub-communities? In other words: does the neighborhood, with all the people of different nationality and ethnicity—or both—living there, describe a community? Or is it the other way around, with nationality and ethnicity as the base of community and the neighborhood just a place where those meet and interact? Or is it even more complex, with people belonging to various and multiple communities that intersect all the time? How to study this with the help of one single concept?

In her article in *The Journal of American Folklore*, Noyes develops a concept of group instead of a concept of community. She distinguishes between a cultural aspect of group—that is, "networks of interactions in which culture is created" (ibid.)—and an identity aspect of group, that is, community—which she then locates within performance: "The community exists in its collective performances: they are the locus

of its imagining in their content and of its realization in their performance” (469). Consequently, group is the term that facilitates a dialogue between these two aspects. As I will show later on the distinction between an institutionalized pattern of social interactions (i.e. networks) and an imagined belonging to a collectivity (i.e. community) has two shortcomings. On the one hand, orders as well as meaning actualize within practices. On the other hand, belonging is not imagined. People do belong to a certain social entity—that I call a *we* here—by means of participating in practices. Moreover I am not convinced that group holds more analytical value than community. In contrast to Noyes, I prefer the term community instead of group because firstly, community holds a spatial and temporal connotation that is highly relevant for the study of expressive culture and secondly, because of its (etymologically) implication of commonality as the basis of (shared) identity. The question is: what is it that people have in common?

The discussion on community has started long ago. Here, I will just briefly summarize the main figures related to the concept and sketch out some general arguments that I will return to later in this paper.¹⁰ The first significant and well-discussed contribution is Ferdinand Tönnies’ (2001) differentiation between community and association in his 1887 book *Community and Civil Society*. This differentiation is based on the distinction between nature and culture; while community is a natural or organic relation between people, association is cultural and mechanic. In Max Weber’s 1922 work *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie* (2005), he avoids the nature-culture division by focusing on processes. In this chapter on basic sociological terms he speaks of communal relationship (*Vergemeinschaftung*) and associative relationship (*Vergesellschaftung*) instead of community and association.¹¹ Still, Tönnies’ ideas remained influential. In the 1920s, Robert E. Park and the Chicago School expanded Tönnies’ conception and asked whether collective belonging persists in urban societies. Fifty years later Gerald Suttles (1972) directed his attention to the structural characteristics of urban societies, such as administration and government policy. He offered an approach on community based on utilitarian considerations and circumstantial consociations. After this structural interlude, ideological approaches became the central interest. In line with the cultural turn, attempts like Anthony P. Cohen’s *The Construction of Community* (1985) shifted the attention from formulating structural models of community to those focusing on meaning. With his work *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson (1991) coined the correspondent term that illustrates this change of perspective.¹² Most recently, Robert Putnam (2000) approached community by analyzing the change of social capital in the United States.

These approaches differ in their definition of commonality. Whether commonality is defined by place, identity, or interest is still highly debated. The idea of a shared place privileges face-to-face interaction and co-presence. In line with that, globalization, mobility, and migration lead to a loss of community due to their decreasing effects on co-presence. This conception of commonality has been criticized in at least two ways. First, sharing a place does not mean to have social connection. Second, social connections transgress places. People claim that they belong to a certain community although they do not have face-to-face interactions with all its members. Common

interest and common identity does not require co-presence; take, for instance, nations, ethnic communities, occupational communities, or religious communities. From the end of the 19th century until today the concept of community has lost its emphasis on locality, place, and co-presence. Anderson's *Imagined Communities* can be seen as an example of this development, wherein the author asks why people who have never met feel they belong together.

The idea of commonality in terms of place, however, has not disappeared in total. Locality matters in everyday life and community ties often have a strong local component (cf. Macdonald 2011; Crow 2011). The strength of *community* is that it combines ideas of sociality and place.¹³ Admitting that communities are often geographically dispersed, they still share certain places and spaces. These places, although dispersed and not the same, are similar, as for instance places of worship among religious communities.¹⁴ In this regard place or locality can be thought of as an arrangement through which community transpires. The question then is how place promotes social connection. And how does community materialize in place and space?

The idea of shared place has triggered a third criticism. Especially the thesis of loss or persistence of community by means of globalization and migration reveals a romanticized view and normative perspective. Here the question is not only what a community is but also what it should be. Community often is described and qualified by harmony and solidarity, or both. But religious and national communities, for instance, show harmony as well as conflict. Hence, harmony and solidarity cannot be assumed, they have to be explained.¹⁵ The normative implications of community caused folklorists (for example, Bausinger 1999 and Feintuch 2001) to question the analytical value of the concept. However, I advocate that the normativity of a useful term should not lead to its abandonment. On the contrary, normative implication can function as a useful starting point for research: why do we associate harmony and solidarity with community, why do we assume that there is longing for community (Feintuch 2001) and, most importantly, which role do folklore and expressive culture play so that the feeling to be part of a we becomes "value-laden" (ibid. 150)? To conceptualize *community* as a feeling of we-ness offers perspectives to understand the term beyond normative implications.

Despite the arguments against *community* as a concept, I consider it—especially for the study of folklore and popular culture—of analytical value. Moving forward, I see practice as the commonality that qualifies *community*. In this vein, I understand community as a group of people sharing a feeling of we-ness. This feeling transcends times and spaces and embraces different scales (colleagues, family, nations, and societies). In this regard, community is a state of mind (cf. Shore 1993). The assumptions of practice theory offer a new and valuable perspective on mind and thereby on the conception of a feeling of we-ness.

Practice Theory: New Vocabulary and New Perspectives

Andreas Reckwitz (2008)¹⁶ sees the advantages of practice theory¹⁷ in its new social-theoretical vocabulary. Practice theory decenters the common sociological approaches

of the social. In the following I will briefly name the main assumptions of practice theory which I am going to discuss later in relation to Schatzki's concept of social practices and my account on practicing community. Thereby I will develop a praxeological conception of we-ness.

The idea of practices centers on terms like relationality and positionality, locality and actuality, as well as contingency and emergence. Thus practice theory is an attempt to transcend dichotomies in social theory such as individual and society, thinking and acting, individualism and wholism/objectivism, inner and outer. In practice theory a recursive relation between those concepts is assumed. Hence, these concepts are understood as dualities instead of dichotomies. Practice theorists set themselves against a hyperrational and intellectualized picture of human agency and the social. They reject essentialist beliefs. Instead, practice theorists understand identity as determined by contextual relations and shift bodily movements, things, and practical knowledge to the center of the socio-theoretical vocabulary. Although practice theory emphasizes the local production of the social it claims that situations do not exist for themselves. Practice theory understands the social as effect of the enactment of practices. Thus, practices are the location of the social as well as the smallest unit of social analysis. In this regard, Reckwitz defines practices as follows:

A "practice" (*Praktik*) is a routinized type of behavior which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, "things" and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge. A practice [...] forms so to speak a "block" whose existence necessarily depends on the existence and specific interconnectedness of these elements, and which cannot be reduced to any one of these single elements. Likewise, a practice represents a pattern which can be filled out by a multitude of single and often unique actions reproducing the practice (Reckwitz 2005, 251-252).

A shorter and frequently cited phrase defines practices as a "nexus of doings and saying" (Schatzki 1996, 89). Yet, in its short version this citation abridges his approach in a critical way. In Schatzki's view a nexus of doings and sayings that constitute a practice is linked through (a) practical understanding, (b) explicit rules and principles, and (c) teleoaffective structures "embracing ends, projects, tasks, purposes, beliefs, emotions, and moods" (ibid.). Later Schatzki adds general understanding—for instance, religious convictions—as a forth type of linkage (Schatzki 2002). On the basis of Wittgenstein's insights into practical understanding, Schatzki criticizes the theoretical assumptions of Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens as over-intellectualizing accounts.¹⁸ Schatzki identifies practical understanding—in Bourdieu's terms the practical sense located in the habitus and in Giddens' terms the practical consciousness of rule following—as the basic concept of the two accounts. Following Wittgenstein, Schatzki argues that it is impossible to formulate practical understanding exhaustively in words. Hence, practical understanding is not analyzable. For this reason, a definition of practice cannot solely be based on practical understanding. What is more, practical understanding in

the sense of *knowing how to* does not determine action overall. Therefore, Schatzki adds explicit rules, teleoaffective structures, and general understanding as co-determinants to his definition of practice.¹⁹ Intertwined with arrangements of human and non-human elements, practices form the (site of the) social. The arrangements themselves are characterized by causal, spatial and intentional relations, presuppositions as well as meanings/identities (Schatzki 2002).

How can a feeling of we-ness—that is the feeling of being part of a larger group, to belong to a certain social entity—be conceptualized within this framework? Schatzki entitled his first book *Social Practices*, although he acknowledges the tautological aspect of this title. Every practice is a social practice; there are no such things as individual practices. In this regard sociality of practices has two meanings: first, a practice is carried out by different people at different places at different times (cf. Reckwitz 2008, 252); second, a practice never belongs to a single individual. In *Frames of War*, Judith Butler (2009) addresses this fact with the development of a social ontology that is based on an ontology of the body. According to her, what someone or something is is based on presuppositions:

The “being” of the body to which this ontology refers is one that is always given over to others, to norms, to social and political organizations that have developed historically [...]. It is not possible first to define the ontology of the body and then to refer to the social significations the body assumes. Rather, to be a body is to be exposed to social crafting and form, and that is what makes the ontology of the body a social ontology. In other words, the body is exposed to socially and politically articulated forces as well as to claims of sociality—including language, work, and desire—that make possible the body’s persisting and flourishing (Butler 2009, 2-3).

For this reason, to ask what something or who someone is means to ask about the operations of power.²⁰ Bourdieu developed the concept of symbolic power and violence to address this issue. Symbolic power describes the imposition of categories and categorizations of thought and perception such as gender, ethnicity or nationality, usually by agents who hold more symbolic capital upon social agents who hold less symbolic capital. The dominated agents tend to take the social order as natural, legitimate and just. Moreover, with her idea of sociality Butler emphasizes that every *I* is unthinkable without a *you*.²¹ The “constitutive sociality of the body” (Butler 2009, 54) makes body and mind on the one hand, capable of desire and on the other hand, subjected. Body and mind are always in place, part of environment and circumstances. To say that body and mind exists within an environment therefore is not enough; there are no bodies and minds without environment:

There is no life without the conditions of life that variably sustain life, and those conditions are pervasively social, establishing not the discrete ontology of the person, but rather the interdependency of persons, involving reproducible and sustaining social relations, and relations to the environment and to non-human forms of life,

broadly considered (Butler 2009, 19).

Butler's social ontology holds concrete implications about how to address issues of the social. Practices are social means. Hence, they are public and observable.²² That is, doings and sayings are seen to be understandable to potential observers (cf. Schmidt 2012, 226-62). Moreover, practices might be intelligible for a wider public—although wider public here does not mean general public. To be intelligible means to be recognized as similar, to be part of a *we* (cf. Schatzki 1996, 117).²³ In other words, intelligibility is the basis of a *we*. Hence, intelligibility qualifies what I named here a feeling of we-ness.²⁴ The question then is: in which ways do body and mind materialize and thereby exist? Butler's approach of the social by means of a new ontology of the body illustrates how practice theory and its assumptions offer new perspectives on body, mind, things, knowledge, discourse, and agency.

Every practice is actualized at a certain locality at a certain time. Therefore, it makes sense to understand practices as repetition instead of routine. The difference between routine and repetition addresses the question of stability of practices and the reproduction of the social. Hilmar Schäfer (2013) discussed the aspect of in/stability in practice theory in a very fruitful way. Inspired by Derrida's reflections on iterability he understands repetition in a post-structural sense: As mentioned above, every practice is repeated under already altered circumstances, that is, by means of time, space, and agents or all three at the same time. Thus every repetition is different. A practice reappears but it is never exactly the same; practice as repetition then is the "reappearance of the dissimilar as a similar" (Waldenfels 2001; translated by the author).²⁵ If the variation is small enough, it makes no difference to the practice in general. If the variations are recognized, they reveal that a kind of script exists that is usually followed.²⁶ This idea is comparable to Richard Bauman's approach to retelling. Assuming that every performance holds a potential to failure, he states: "Viewed both as recontextualizations and recontextualizations, such retelling offer an especially illuminating vantage point on the classic problem of variation" (Bauman 2012, 112).

If the commonality of a community is conceptualized as a shared feeling of we-ness—as I suggest here—and we-ness is defined as a state of mind, then practice theory sheds new light on our understanding of community. In proposing we-ness as a state of mind I do by no means follow an individualistic approach. Neither do I focus on the inner with demarcation of the outer. The body in practice theory is not only a tool one uses to express inner states of mind. According to practice theory, the mind cannot be separated from the body. How we consider who and what we are is related to the ways we treat and use our body and vice versa. Thus, it is more appropriate to speak about mind/body than of mind and body.

How are meaning and identity applied to and enacted by bodies/minds? Schatzki, like Bourdieu and Giddens, draws on a Wittgensteinian approach to meaning. In contrast to (neo-)Saussurian understandings, meaning does not derive from difference but from usage and activities:

Once again, differences are results, not determinants, in this case of actual activities.

It follows that meaning does not, as a general matter, arise from difference. Rather, it arises from *actuality*: actual relations among entities, and what these entities actually do. Because, moreover, semantic difference presupposes meaning, it, too, is a product of actuality (Schatzki 2002, 57).

In *The Site of the Social*, Schatzki defines identity as a subtype of meaning saying “entities with an identity are entities that have an understanding of their own meaning” (Schatzki 2002, 47).²⁷ In this regard a person’s identity has two analytically distinguishable and possibly divergent components: a person’s meaning and that person’s understanding of his/her meaning. Schatzki’s notion of meaning/identities resembles conceptions of subject positions, as developed by Foucault and Butler.²⁸ Consequently, having a position is something like being intelligible as such and such: “Meaning and identity arise (in part) from where an entity fits into the mazes of relations that characterize the arrangements of which it is a part” (Schatzki 2002, 53). Thus, meaning/identity and position are distinguished but co-dependent. Someone or something holds a position within a practice-arrangement-bundle by means of participation. Hence, an actor²⁹ is a participant of a certain practice. Schatzki is not quite clear on that. For him, “being a participant is a factual matter” (85). In my view, a participant can be defined as someone who takes part, relates and understands his/her acting as part of a practice. A participant recognizes other participants of the practice because their doing and saying are intangible for him/her. Thus, s/he feels a specific relation that I call a feeling of we-ness.³⁰ An individual, in contrast, is a person who participates in multiple practices. Hence, an individual enjoys a multitude of *wes*.³¹ The practices cross each other in the individual. For this reason, it is useful to distinguish analytically between meanings/identities of participants and of individuals. The identity of a participant of a practice is bound to the practice. The meaning/identity of a participant is the position he or she holds within the practice-arrangement-bundle. An individual, on the contrary, can participate in many practices. Consequently, individual identities/meanings are emergent, labile, and manifold phenomena. Even though an individual’s meaning/identity is multiple, most often individual identities/meanings are organized around central axes. Individuals vary in the degree to which their identity is centered and in how many centers their identity holds. Nevertheless, I follow Schatzki in his assumption of a chief identity in the sense of what a person understands himself or herself principally to be.

If identity/meaning is actualized by means of participating in a practice, the following question arises: how does participation lead to a feeling of we-ness, that is, to be part of a community? In *Community of Practice*, Etienne Wenger (2008 [1998]) develops an understanding of community by drawing on assumptions of practice theory and coins a term that recently has become popular among social scientists. He positions his concept within a social theory of learning³² and defines a community of practice as follows:

Over time, this collective learning results in practices that reflect both the pursuit of our enterprises and the attendant social relations. These practices are thus the property of

a kind of community created over time by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise. It makes sense, therefore, to call these kinds of communities *communities of practice* (Wenger 2008 [1998], 45).

Communities of practices are characterized by social and intentional relations: a certain group of people shares an interest for a specific issue and works along this issue.

Wenger puts emphasis on the negotiation of meaning within practices. Members of a community of practice constantly negotiate meaning by means of participation and reification. They embody meaning in the process of participation; artefacts of practice embody meaning in the process of reification. Similar to assumptions in practice theory, participation and reification as duality to the human experience describe ongoing processes. Hence, stability of meaning and of the community of practice cannot be assumed. Instead, stability must be explained. Being an active participant in the practice of a social community means to construct one's identity in relation to this community: "Such participation shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we interpret what we do" (Wenger 2008 [1998], 4). Individuals develop competences by means of participating. Competence here can be thought of as *knowing how to* and is comparable to Bourdieu's practical sense, Giddens' practical consciousness, and Schatzki's practical understanding. In this vein, dimensions of competence become dimensions of identity. To participate in the practice of a social community means on the one hand to get involved and engaged and on the other hand to recognize and acknowledge others as participants of the same practice. In this regard, Wenger emphasizes that membership varies according to the position—for instance, at the core or at the periphery of a community—of the participant.

Although I agree with many of Wenger's arguments—especially with his ideas on peripheries, centers and boundaries of communities—our approaches part ways at his limitation of *community* to engagement. According to Wenger, the intentional aspect, the object of interest, qualifies a community of practice: "By associating practice with community, I am not arguing that everything anybody might call a community is defined by practice or has a practice that is specific to it; nor that everything anybody might call a practice is the defining property of a clearly specifiable community" (72). In Wenger's view, neighborhoods and playing the piano are not communities of practice. Engagement is one mode of belonging apart from others such as imagination and alignment. A TV audience or newspaper readership therefore forms different kinds of communities, which he suggests we call communities of taste, experience, or proximity. In consequence, Wenger's concept of *communities of practice* seems to be close to an idea of practice that is based on the dichotomy of thinking (mind) and practice (body). His differentiation between communities of practice and of taste or experience is closer to a definition of practice as human activity (opposed to thinking) than to Schatzki's definition of practices as "temporally unfolding and spatially dispersed nexus of doings and sayings" (Schatzki 1996, 89). In line with the latter definition, it is more appropriate to speak of *practiced* or *practicing* community instead of *community of practice*. And both terms, again, are tautological because within practice theory a community without practice is not possible. Following Schatzki's assumption

that teleoaffective structures with their tasks, projects, and ends are one dimension of practices, every practice can be thought of as directed towards something. This means that every participant of a practice has at least one intentional relation with another element of the arrangement the practice transpires through. Communities with a strong intentional relation form a specific type of community. In line with that, I propose to understand *community* as qualified by a feeling of we-ness by means of participating in a practice instead of intentionality. Every feeling of we-ness evolves through participation in practice and every practice has the potential to evolve a feeling of we-ness among its participants.

I began this section by noting that practice theory can be understood as a current within cultural theory. Practice theory, however, transgresses cultural theories in the sense that it shifts the focus from social constructivism and the metaphysics implied to ontology (cf. Butler 2009, 168).³³ Ontology in this sense is not to be understood as a fundamental structure of being beyond social and political organization. To make practices the main locus of social or cultural analysis means to analyze events and situations instead of perspectives or representation. Or, as Annemarie Mol puts it, it is not about talk (Mol 2002, 25-29). To understand and to research community as a phenomenon of the everyday then means to leave a reconstructive approach that focuses on talk and discourse in the sense of writing about different perspectives of communities. Instead, community should be researched by taking into account all the different events or situations people describe and live. Consequently, events with all their elements must be the focus of our analysis. Adele E. Clarke (2005) has developed a fruitful way to analyze events and situations.³⁴ I will proceed to exemplify how community as an emic phenomenon can be grasped by means of *community* as a concept based on practice theory. Therefore I shall—motivated by the methodology developed by Clarke and Mol—discuss the example of the *International Street Festival* introduced at the beginning.

Practicing Community: Boundaries, Membership, and Space

Before returning to the festival, I am going to exemplify my idea of a practicing *community*. For two reasons, I will do so by taking on a different example than the street festival, namely the practice of study and the community of students. First, the student example is complex enough but not too complex to illustrate my idea of community. Second, I am going to use this example later on in order to contrast aspects of the street festival. The example might be straightforward, but it opens up a perspective of community that is fruitful for other types of community (e.g., ethnic and religious communities, national communities, or gender communities).

How is community practiced? Drawing on assumptions of practice theory as presented above, I understand identity as enacted by people in practices, that is, in the repetition of bodily doings and sayings. Imagine a lecture hall: Going to the university and sitting in a large hall in which the chairs are directed to the front, listening to someone in the front, taking notes of the things she or he says, perhaps in order to prepare for an exam, is enacting oneself as a student by means of taking part in the

practice of studying.

Schatzki's concept of practice-arrangements-bundles and Clarke's situational analysis offer a good starting point to depict how a community of students is enacted in a lecture hall. The arrangement (in this particular case, a lecture hall and the university as a whole) consists of non-human elements such as chairs, tables, walls, a blackboard, maybe a projector, paper and pencils, and human elements, such as the lecturer and the students. Usually, the majority of people in a lecture hall sit close to each other, directed to the front, looking at someone who is usually alone. This is an aspect of the spatial relation that, according to Schatzki, exists among every arrangement. The students are there because they have to be due to study guidelines; this describes a causal relation. The study guidelines, even if not present at the very moment, are another element of the arrangement. The students' attention is directed toward the lecturer or the things she or he says; here one can speak of an intentional relation. The material elements allow for sitting and writing, for displaying pictures and graphs but they make it difficult to do experiments and less feasible to have discussions in small groups on a subject; thus the material arrangement presupposes action.

Let's have a look at the practice of studying.³⁵ The following is observable: The students do similar things; they take notes, listen to the person at the front, look at pictures and slides displayed at the front, or have conversations about the party last night because of boredom. In Schatzki's terms these are the doings and sayings. The practice of studying involves knowing how to take notes, that is, how to listen and to write simultaneously, how to deduce what is relevant information given by a lecturer, how to prepare for an exam, and so on. It also involves knowing how to (the practical understanding) behave during a lecture—for instance, when to be silent or when to talk. The action here—that is, the doings and sayings—is not only determined by practical understanding. Studying is regulated by explicit rules, for instance, by study guidelines and by module plans which prescribe when to attend which lecture. Moreover, the doings and sayings of studying are linked by orientations toward ends and how things matter for the actor; studying is composed of taking notes in every lecture (tasks), preparing for an exam (project), and effectively graduating (end) as well as the motivation to gain knowledge or to get a better starting position for a future career, or both.

The person at the front is enacting him/herself as lecturer because she or he is doing something different from the rest of the people in the room. So we got a close proximity between a lot of people doing similar things and a distance to someone doing something else. The feeling of we-ness and otherness is at hand in this very situation. Commonality in the sense of mentality and practical intelligibility, according to Schatzki, is a dimension of human coexistence: "Commonality exists when the same understanding, rule, end, project, or emotion is expressed in different people's actions or when the same action makes sense to different people to perform" (Schatzki 2002, 147). In line with that, we can speak of a community of students here. Besides, we can also assume a community of lecturers or members of the faculty. Even though there is only one present in this situation, the individual knows that there are other people

who have done what she or he is doing now or who are doing the same things at the moment.

The spatial aspect of the arrangement does not confine itself to questions of distance and proximity. Arrangements can also be thought of as *spaces of practice*. Lectures are usually—but not always—held in lecture halls, seminars are given in seminar rooms, and studying at a university requires a material arrangement that is this university.³⁶ Enacting oneself as a student and being part of a community of students then is to use these spaces regularly. Having said that, I would like to emphasize that the practice of studying is carried out in various arrangements. Sitting in a seminar, having discussions with a group of fellow students, sitting at home reading books and papers to prepare for a seminar or an exam, a student enacts him/herself as such by performing similar doings and sayings, following similar rules and understandings, and in line with a similar teleoaffective structure. As part of various arrangements participating in the practice of studying means to take up the position as a student opposed to a lecturer or reader or a librarian or a textbook. This position is actualized anew in this very arrangement.

The relevance of the elements lies in their relation to each other. The different elements gain meaning by means of holding a position within this arrangement. As I mentioned before, every arrangement and consequently every practice too is localized. Actualization differs according to locations. In each of those locations the relations and meaning of the elements (may) alter. With this alteration of relations, the meaning/identity might change as well. Giving a presentation on a subject in a seminar is enacting oneself as a student; giving a presentation on a subject in a lecture hall is enacting oneself as a lecturer. Doings and sayings as well as tasks might look the same for the observer but they can be part of different practices.³⁷ The aspect of actuality does not mean it is impossible or invaluable to speak or write about practices and their arrangements on a more general or abstract level. Bruno Latour addresses this issue nicely in his inverse proportionality of reduction and amplification: an increase in comparability, standardization, and relative universality just leads to a decrease in locality, particularity, materiality, plurality, and continuity (Latour 1999, 24-79).

After spending so much time in the academic realm it might be time for us to leave and get back to the street festival. In this final section I will unfold the concept of community as a practiced feeling of we-ness by posing a series of questions: How are we-ness and otherness practiced? How are community as an emic concept and *community* as an etic concept related? What is membership? How do communities relate to place and space?

Boundaries: We-ness and Otherness

Back at the festival, I got myself Gözleme and a piece of pizza. I sat at one of the tables in front of the stage; the show was about to begin. There was a Spanish flamenco group, a Turkish dance group, and a Portuguese drummers' association. A characteristic shared by all these groups was that they each wore their respective traditional costumes. The countries of origin of the stage performances were as easily spotted as the countries of origin of the stalls. One might describe what went on here as processes

of self-ethnicization using folklore. One might analyze the people's perception of their neighbors as attributions of nationality and see the process of self-ethnicization and attribution as mutually self-reinforcing. In this regard, the public presentation of traditional dances and typical national foodstuffs, one might say, creates symbolic loyalty (to various groups in a "foreign" environment).³⁸

Leaving this mere reconstructive approach aside, I looked at the event itself and the descriptions—not the perspectives and interpretations—given by the residents through the lens of community as feeling of we-ness. Consuming food and taking part or joining in dance performances at the *International Street Festival* is observable. Likewise, it would be possible to survey these doings and evaluate people's motivations and dispositions.³⁹ In talking about the *International Street Festival*, the residents exemplified their notions on communities by talking about food and dance performances. Doing different things or doing things differently for them describes different communities. Every community has boundaries (even if those are blurred and unclear). The concept of *community* as we-ness implicates a degree of exclusiveness. As a social entity community expresses dimensions and processes of social divisions and togetherness. It defines insider and outsider. Those boundaries are constantly negotiated. The sense of belonging varies in its intensity as well as the commitment of its members required by the community (cf. Pfaff-Czarnecka 2011). The line between we and the other is drawn here by means of doings and sayings.

At the stall of the garden allotment association I saw Franz and Ina Becker, a couple I interviewed before. The two pensioners have been living in the neighborhood since the 1950s. Ina came from Bavaria, Franz immigrated from the German Democratic Republic. During that interview the two associated a loss of community with the group of foreign immigrants that had grown as the years went on. They mentioned that there was above all a loss of community due to language differences and the tendencies of various groups to become compartmentalized. To experience a feeling of we-ness one has to understand the actions of the people one identifies with, that is, those actions have to be intelligible, as mentioned above. Language might be one of the most plausible examples to illustrate this fact. Then, Ina Becker complained, "Now there are hardly any Germans living here. You cannot have a chat with anyone anymore" (Becker [pseud.] 2010). She felt surrounded by people whose language she did not understand, whose speaking was not intelligible to her. This sets a border that defines we and the other, at least concerning language (and to language related issues like nationality⁴⁰).⁴¹ I waved a hello to them and thought about the things they said about language differences in the neighborhood—not so much because that is the first thing I associated with them but because I was confused listening to the people sitting at my table. While I was eating the Gözleme a group joined me at the table. The group consisted of four people: three women, two with headscarves, and a man who introduced himself later as Erwin Neuer. They brought some food from the stalls with them and while waiting for the show they had a lively conversation. Erwin Neuer especially caused me confusion because I could not make out what language he was speaking. Later I found out that it was Turkish and German (with a strong accent of the

Ruhrpott region). Erwin Neuer is German, married to a Turkish woman and moved to Stuttgart because he works for the Deutsche Bahn (the German railroad company). He speaks Turkish and would later tell me that he likes Turkey a lot. He and his wife have a holiday home in the southeast of Turkey. But neither does Erwin Neuer identify himself as a Turk nor does he express feelings of belonging to the community of Turks. Likewise, not everyone who has eaten pizza identifies him or herself as Italian or as Portuguese because she or he has clapped to the rhythm of the Portuguese drummer group. Their doings and sayings are similar but their orientations toward ends as well as how things matter for them—that is, their teleoaffective structures—differ. For the man sitting next to me, speaking Turkish is part of his practice of being part of a family, with a Turkish wife and Turkish relatives. For the people around me, eating non-German food is part of their identity as cosmopolitans or as their longing for Spanish food or as their way to remember the last holiday (cf. Jackson 2010; Möhring 2010). This can also be illustrated by two quotations on the shops in the district that have been taken over by immigrants during the years and started to sell different food. “No, I did not go there to buy anything,” explained Margarete Jakobi to me and went on “Why should I, I mean they [the immigrants; the author] did that for their people. There was nothing I would have liked to buy” (Jakobi [pseud.] 2013). Hildegard Immenhofer took up a different stance when she talked to me about the shops and eating “non-German” food: “Of course, we went to these shops. I mean, the vegetables and spices and so on reminded us of our vacation, for example in Italy. So we went there” (Immenhofer [pseud.] 2013).

At least two conclusions can be drawn from the example of the street festival so far. First, not every community experiences itself as such. This issue has been addressed first by Karl Marx with his differentiation between class *in* itself and class *for* itself. As I have intended to show, there is no community without practice and every practice leads to feelings of we-ness. Whether these feelings are expressed and articulated is a different matter. Someone who knows how to play the piano, to take one of the examples of Wenger, might not consider himself or herself as a member of the community of piano players until he is asked. Or a person might say that she or he is not the best and there are many people who have better skills at playing the piano. Here Wenger’s differentiation of center and periphery concerning communities is a beneficial perspective. To discern between community in itself and for itself opens the possibility to clarify the relation between community as an emic concept and community as an etic concept. To articulate one’s belonging to a certain community, to express feelings of we-ness, means to choose one practice and one position within an arrangement over multiple others—they choose one of many possible “we”. As folklorists and cultural anthropologists, we are able to identify many communities based on our studies of practice. One of the most interesting questions—at least in my view—is why people articulate specific belongings. Or, to rephrase a question of Anderson (1991): why are some people willing to die and to kill because they consider themselves as part of a larger we? Here, I relate to politics of belonging in the sense of articulated collective mobilization (cf. Pfaff-Czarnecka 2011).

Second, we are living in a world with presuppositions. We might struggle with them and try to fight them but they are a matter of fact. They can be thought of as frames, in the way Butler (2009) does or as classifications in Bourdieu's account (1984). At the street festival, people might join the Portuguese drummer group because it is part of their enactment as Portuguese. But they might also eat Turkish food because it reminds them of their last holiday and not because they enact themselves as Turks. Hence, Schatzki's differentiation between meaning and identity is very useful here. It is about the difference of being seen and seeing oneself. And this is a differentiation highly relevant for empirical research. If we define the element of an arrangement and its meaning/identity we need to take into account where, how, and why meaning and identity fall apart. Boundaries are negotiated and reified every time people follow practices, namely practices that either define who someone understands him- or herself to be or that define who someone else understands someone else to be. These two aspects of boundaries and exclusiveness point to relations of power and make community a valuable object of critical analysis.⁴² To put it simply, the question is: who is allowed to participate and what does participation include?⁴³ This requires a relational social ontology as put forward by Butler. What counts within this social ontology is not only the relation between we and others—between *I* and *you*—but also within *wes*. Participation in terms of membership is a strong metaphor to grasp this relation. What is more, the metaphor of membership leads us to questions about time and stability of practices and communities.

Endless Becoming? Time and Stability of Membership

As I talked with the people at my table, the stage performances began. The first act was a Turkish dance group consisting of ten people. Their costumes were orange, black, and gray, and decorated with golden sequins. I recognized Hatice as one of the male dancers from an earlier meeting; I met her in the social worker center. But now it was not her on the stage; not in the sense the grammatical gender the personal pronoun implies. While performing, she was actualizing a male position. Later she explained to me that they were short of people. So she had to put on the male costume and dance the male part in order to have an equality of male and female dancers. Here the above-mentioned differentiation between participants and individuals becomes useful. As a participant of this specific dancing practice Hatice enacted herself as a male dancer. As an individual in the everyday, Hatice enacts herself as a woman. On this afternoon her male identity lasted for about five minutes, whereas her female identity will (probably) last her whole life.

In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson (1991) highlights the importance of the concept of empty time for communities or, in his particular case, for nations. Thinking about the street festival, the reader may wonder what being a student and being a German, a migrant or a Catholic have to do with each other and whether they are comparable at all. These different kinds of community are comparable and especially the comparison opens new perspectives.⁴⁴ The most obvious difference between students and ethnic identities is the aspect of time. Whereas being a student can be thought of as a phase of life with a definite start and an ending, being German or being male or female is

usually not thought of as a phase of life. To become part of a community requires phases of orientation as well as of initiation. New students, for example, are shown around at the library, get used to how to enter a building, where to go for advice, how to use the library catalogue, and how to make notes during a lecture. Like performing oneself as a student, Butler and subsequent studies based on her assumptions have shown how sex and gender are performed. Concerning Hatice, it is not simply about putting on a male costume. In this case for instance to enact a position as a male dancer means knowing the steps associated with that position, to dance with a female counterpart and to be acknowledged by the other dancers as well as the audience as a male dancer.⁴⁵ The term “naturalization” for the process of becoming a citizen of a different country than that of origin neatly points to the fact that identities assumed to be natural are not everlasting.⁴⁶

But what happens if we change the perspective? What about ending? What about terminating membership to a community? In her essay on the social base of folklore Noyes reminds her readers of the ambivalence of community:

Where belonging is thick, with a rich imaginary reinforced by dense interaction among community members or strong external pressures, individuals are likely to feel an almost sacramental strength of meaning in everyday actions that is not free of claustrophobia. Community can be a painful inheritance and it restricts individual freedoms (Noyes 2012, 25).

To conceptualize *community* as a feeling of we-ness offers ways to think *community* beyond communitarian imaginings, that Noyes (ibid.) criticizes, and to draw attention to the leaving of communities as well. Transgressing is often understood in terms of becoming something new but seldom about ending. Graduation marks the moment when someone ends his / her membership of being part of the student community. How do people leave communities? How do they end to be part of a nation, to be black or white, to be part of a specific sex or gender? How do people create those phases where the feeling of we-ness stops?⁴⁷ And what remains? When is multiple membership possible and when is it not? And for what reasons might it be impossible? If we consider the body in line with practice theory, then we face a trained body, a knowing body. Ends are never fully complete. To draw on Wenger’s wording, what effects does the history of learning have on the individual? The metaphor of the palimpsest is fruitful to understand the remains which will still be there after being member of different communities. The palimpsest points us to the effects of embodiment; layers of embodiments individuals gained by means of participating in various practices.

Concerning the aspect of time in communities, we may distinguish between short-term and long-term communities and the effects of participating in them for the individual. A long-term membership might be more important concerning its centrality for the individual. Is it possible to speak of a community of festival participants? It is, because the festival is a practice-arrangement-bundle where people could consider themselves as part of the festival and experience a feeling of we-ness with the other people, although they might not express this feeling directly. Moreover this festival,

this event, is also part of a long-term community, that is, the neighborhood or the district, respectively. It is an event where people actualize their relation to the district and get involved with the district, whether as neighbors, as politicians, or as social workers.

This feeling of we-ness in terms of relation to the neighborhood is evoked by Gökay Sofuoğlu, the director of the social worker center at that time. He was on the stage and greeted some of the local politicians and started his speech as follows: "Intercultural relations can be tough and hard work but at the same time they are wonderful." In an interview he later told me: "The festival is about bringing people together, to see what the others are doing and to learn from each other." In a local newspaper article, he said, "Especially for the children it is about exploring the similarities across national differences and to overcome fear of contact" (qtd. in Muzenhardt 1997, translated by the author). On stage, he articulated a feeling of we-ness. Being at the street festival was an opportunity for the residents to actualize themselves as being part of this special community. The people that take part in the festival enact themselves as part of a community despite all their differences. Elke Winter, a former social worker in the district, stated during our interview that this was the initial idea of the festival. She remembered a sentence from one of the residents with whom she established the festival over twenty years ago: "Our work is done as soon as everyone is dancing here on the streets. If we manage to effect that, then we got Europe in a nutshell" (Winter [pseud.] 2013). The same goes for national celebration and holidays, religious festivals or family activities. Short-term communities can function as actualizations of long-term communities (cf. Damsholt 2009). Although he felt an uneasiness to call some musicians a community, Feintuch's conclusion to this article perfectly fits my ideas of short-term and long-term communities: "But in the course of making their music, they have also managed to create a social space that is moral, and despite its contingent and ephemeral qualities, this allows them to feel the kind of connections long associated with community, however fleeting the experience" (Feintuch 2001, 159). The loss of those events affects the long-term feelings of we-ness. To study communities by means of analyzing events in terms of performance therefore is a valuable perspective for folklore studies and cultural analysis (cf. Kapchan 1995).

Spaces of Practice as Spaces of Community

I talked about boundaries of community. One of those boundaries is drawn between those that take part in the festival and those that do not. The festival is an opportunity for people to talk about community and cohesion as well as the decrease of community they experience. It is about the festival as a community and moreover about the community of the neighborhood, about a neighborhood that has changed due to immigration in terms of nationality, ethnicity, religion, and structure of age. The street festival, thus, can be thought of as an important space for the community of the district. And this space enjoys a specific location. For Aliyah Yilmaz, another resident, the experience of a decrease in community is related to the location where the street festival used to take place. It moved from the main street to the periphery of the district. This addresses

another important aspect of communities: the question of space/place.

As mentioned above, the street festival has been organized by the social worker center from the beginning. The social worker center itself used one of the three railroad residential homes when it was founded in the 1980s. The space became available after the labor migrants moved into the flats in the district. The railroad residential home was located where I entered the district at the beginning of this text. Next to a Protestant church and on the main street with different shops, cafés and bars, it was situated in the center of the district. Due to a restructuration program at the end of the 1990s the social center moved into a new and bigger building. The new building was less than 300 meters away from the former location of the social worker center but it was located at the periphery of the district. During our conversation Aliyah Yilmaz mentioned wistfully the period when the festival took place on the main street. She described the way all the surrounding streets used to be closed and the whole district came together for the festival: “I really miss those times. [...] At that time [twenty year ago, the author] the people cared more about those things, it was really crowded. All the surrounding streets were closed and there were people everywhere. The whole district came together for the street festival. It was a warm-hearted atmosphere then” (Yilmaz [pseud.] 2009). I said earlier that in order to be part of a community of students one needs to use the space/place that is called university regularly. Nations are related to geographical territories. Religious groups are related to places of worship and holy places. Occupational communities are related to occupational spaces. Those places/spaces evolve through practices and practices transpire through them. The street festival is a way to experience community and because the community comes together, drinks, eats, dances, and enjoys performances the street festival exists. These spaces/places are material. Bourdieu emphasized that the material/objective circumstances lead to class specific habitus. Becoming a member of a community then is to start using specific spaces/places and to get used to them. To end being a member means to leave those places/spaces and to not use them anymore. Paolo Vernandez takes a similar view on the fundamental loss of the sense of community and cohesion in the district, but in particular connects the relocation of the street festival with a declining participation of the German population. He reported that people from the local allotment association are now the only Germans who come: “When the festival took place on the street [next to the church, the author] I think everyone was keen on taking part. But when they decided that the festival should take part next to the new building down the road, participation decreased. Just a few Germans are coming now, mostly members of the allotment garden association because they got their own stall” (Vernandez [pseud.] 2009). Other Germans, in his view, are not part of the community of the district anymore because they are not coming to the street festival anymore. Being part of a community means to take part in community activities, respectively practices.

Community issues are sometimes carried out in terms of territorial power—the right to be there (cf. Pfaff-Czarnecka 2011).⁴⁸ The two women with the headscarves next to me were members of the local mosque. The mosque is not situated within the

district. The Islamic community rented an old baking factory at the periphery of the district in the early 2000s. In 2010 the community wanted to buy a house within the district. This was followed by a lot of protest among the residents (not only the ones of German descent). Eventually, the baking factory was up for sale and the Islamic communities bought it. There was a lot more space. Parking space as one of the major arguments against the mosque in the neighborhood therefore was no longer an issue. Even though the community had been using the baking factory as a mosque for ten years, there were still protests by the surrounding residents.⁴⁹ Dignitaries of the local Catholic and Protestant churches argued for the mosque and claimed that the Islamic community had a right to establish a building at this particular place. Because the Islamic community took responsibility for the community of the district by means of offering help with homework, organizing free time activities for children, and taking part in interreligious activities they were part of the community. To be conceived as a member of a *community* means to be recognized as taking part actively in the places/spaces of that *community*.

It might be easy to define place/space for occupational communities, religious communities, even for LGBT communities, but what about ethnic communities or the feeling of we-ness among gender communities? The last two are interesting because they do not belong to a specific arrangement, to a specific space of practice, but to many. Schatzki discerns dispersed practices from integrated practices. Following my argument on the relation between practices and communities so far, the following questions arise: Might it be useful to distinguish between dispersed and integrated communities as well? Are there differences between communities that are enacted in a specific space of practice like occupational communities (as for instance the scientific community) and those communities that are enacted in different spaces of practice as ethnic communities and gender communities? The two women next to me use different spaces within the mosque than the men do. Hence, there are spatial differentiations concerning dispersed communities. Recently, Stefan Hirschauer (2014) argued that it is necessary to look at when and where differentiations between human beings become important. If we take the feeling of we-ness as practiced and assume that a person can hold multiple memberships in different communities then it might be interesting to ask how those membership belongings actualize in different arrangements. Wenger's ideas on overlapping practices, on brokers and boundary objects, on peripheries and centers could be very inspiring if we transfer those from occupational communities to communities in general.

Outlook (instead of a Conclusion)

My aim in writing this article was to outline a praxeological concept of community, a concept that is of analytical value for the study of the everyday. Motivated especially by the work of Schatzki, I have proposed community as a feeling of we-ness that evolves and transpires through bundles of practices and arrangements among participants of these practices. Moreover, I have suggested to understand everyday notions of community—community for itself—as articulations of any possible practiced

community—community in itself. To use community as one analytical concept facilitates asking for the differences and similarities of a variety of everyday phenomena. To contrast the we-ness among women with the we-ness among claim processors might shed new light on the one, on the other or on both. Taking my fieldwork of a street festival as a point of departure to think about *community* as a concept, I have drawn attention to aspects of boundaries, space and time as well as proposed metaphors such as membership and palimpsest for future research. The example of the street festival, furthermore, has shown that on the one hand the concept of community is a valuable perspective for folklorists and on the other hand how folklorists with their experience in the study of public and expressive culture can make a contribution to the development of practice theory.

On my way going back and forth between the festival and the literature I have probably raised more questions than given answers. I will leave it at that, noting that it reminds me of a wonderful description—I cannot remember where I came across it—of what science is about: the essence of study and research are not answers and facts but everlasting doubts and questions.

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Notes

- 1 For the history of the district, see Kurz (2005).
- 2 The first recruitment agreement was signed with Italy in 1955. During the following years, further agreements were signed between the Federal Republic of Germany and the sending countries Greece and Spain (1960), Turkey (1961), Morocco (1963), Portugal (1964), Tunisia (1965), and Yugoslavia (1968). During the 1973 oil crisis, the German parliament agreed to cease this type of recruitment and dissolved the agreements.
- 3 In Germany, the term “immigrant background” (Migrationshintergrund) has been adopted in official statistics in recent years as the description of individuals with foreign origins. Everyone who has moved to the territory of today’s Federal Republic of Germany since 1949, as well as all foreigners born in Germany and everyone born in Germany with at least one parent who moved to Germany or was born there after 1949, is described as having an immigration background. A concept of ethnicity such as that used for example in the United Kingdom or the U.S. is not used in German official statistics.
- 4 All of these data are as of 2014, see Landeshauptstadt Stuttgart (2015).
- 5 Developments in the district are also reflected in the associations. Some groups that

existed in the early period are no longer there, as the members have all moved away; a Spanish and a Turkish association, for example, whose members returned to their home countries or spend most of their time there after reaching retirement age. Only a few of the first “guest-worker generation” settled in the Nordbahnhofviertel permanently. For many of them, it is visits to their children and grandchildren that are now their main reason for visiting Stuttgart again.

- 6 The names of the residents have been changed and are marked as pseudonyms when cited. However, the names were changed according to national and ethnic equivalence in accordance to the real names. The translations of the German quotations are mine.
- 7 In order to discern between an emic and etic usage of the term, “community” as an analytical concept will be written in italics.
- 8 This might also be the reason why the term is absent in disciplinary reference books such as *A Dictionary of English Folklore* (Simpson & Roud 2000), *American Folklore. An Encyclopedia* (1996), *Folklore: An Encyclopedia of Beliefs, Customs, Tales, Music, and Art* (1998) and a *Companion to Folklore* (2012) while it is listed in sociological works of reference (see annotation 10).
- 9 Performance can also be understood in terms of performativity as for instance developed by Judith Butler. Her approach of performativity has much in common with practice theory. In folkloristics, however, performance is usually referred to the works of Kenneth Burke. In order to avoid confusion I will use performance and perform here in the way they are usually used in folklore and instead use enactment and enact to relate to practice theory. For the difference between performance and practice theory in Folklore and Folklife Studies see Bronner (2012); for performance as concept for the study of expressive culture see Kapchan (1995) and Bauman (2012).
- 10 For an overview of the term and concept of community see for instance Amit (2004), Crow (2011), Gebhardt (2014), and Shore (1993). For a detailed and extensive analysis of the term and its usage in social sciences see the *Connected Communities Project* (Crow and Mah 2012).
- 11 Talcott Parsons chose communal and associative relationships as translation for *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung*. In a new version of *Economy and Society*, Keith Tribe translated *Vergemeinschaftung* as formation of community and *Vergesellschaftung* as formation of association. For a detailed discussion on the translation see Swedberg (2005, 11-12 & 43-44).
- 12 Although Imagined Community became a symbol of an approach on community based on social constructivism, Anderson, taking on a Marxist perspective, discussed meaning in relation to economic developments and material aspects and thereby grounded the symbolic construction of community.
- 13 This might be the more apparent for German speakers as the German language differentiates between *Gemeinde* (place, locality) and *Gemeinschaft* (sociality).
- 14 Schatzki, with reference to geographical approaches, proposes the terms “activity space” and “activity-place space” to address the spatial relations of practice-arrangement-bundles. (Schatzki 2002, 42-44) For a discussion of the spatial aspect of *community* see the third section of this essay.
- 15 On the contrary, conflict and discussion enjoy the potential of fostering community in

terms of negotiation. Moreover, to be able to criticise is often based on belonging; see for instance the example of a migrant in Switzerland given by Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka: “Your homeland is where you are allowed to criticise” (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2011, 206).

- 16 For an English-language discussion of the development, assumptions, and currents in practice theory, see Reckwitz’ article in the *European Journal of Social Theory* (Reckwitz 2002).
- 17 To speak of one single practice theory is impossible. In reference to Sherry Ortner (1984), I will, however, use the term in the singular as a symbol for a variety of theories and methods that share basic assumptions. None of these different approaches will be outlined and discussed in detail. Rather, I will highlight specific aspects and dimensions of practice theory insofar as they are related to my conceptualization of *community*. For an exhaustive discussion see for instance the works of Reckwitz (for instance 2002 and 2008).
- 18 Schatzki lays out detailed discussions of the concepts of Bourdieu and Giddens in his book *Social Practices* (Schatzki 1996); his article in *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* gives a shorter version of this discussion (Schatzki 1997). For Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, social fields and capitals see for instance Bourdieu (1977; 1984; 1990), for Giddens theory of structuration see Giddens (1984).
- 19 According to Schatzki, practical understanding, rules, teleoaffective structures, and general understanding do not cause action in the sense of an abstract mental or real apparatus. As “aspects of how things stand or are going for someone ongoingly involved with persons, objects, and situations” they make up “conditions of life” that “articulate what makes sense to people to do [...]” (Schatzki 1997, 303).
- 20 Butler sets a strong emphasize on norms, and the iterability, heterogeneity, and contingency thereof. This means that a norm is an ongoing process of negotiation. In line with that, Butler argues for an account of performativity instead of construction that offers a perspective on ontological effects and the process of materialization (Butler 2009, 168).
- 21 The idea of an individual or a group as being defined by others has been introduced to folklore by Kenneth Burke writing about the “paradox of substance.” Referring to Spinoza, Burke (1969, 23) states: “the word ‘substance,’ used to designate what a thing *is*, derives from a word designating something that a thing *is not*,” highlighting thereby the relevance of the context of a thing for the meaning/identity of the thing. This conception is in line with (neo-)Saussurian approaches on meaning, as for instance Bourdieu’s, where meaning derives from difference. However, this conception stays in opposition to an approach based on Wittgenstein, where the meaning/identity of a thing derives from actuality (see my argument below).
- 22 For Bourdieu, for instance, dispositions are public and hence observable. Therefore, they function as object of analysis.
- 23 Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka’s concept of belonging is very close to this notion of intelligibility: “Belonging together [...] means sharing experience and the tacit self-evidence of being, of what goes without saying; means jointly taking things for granted, and sharing common knowledge and meanings” (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2011, 204).
- 24 One might see my idea of we-ness as comparable to the concept of *communitas* as developed by Victor (e.g. 2000) and Edith Turner (2012). Although the term *communitas*

derives from the Latin word for community, it gained a specific meaning in the writings of the Turners' and subsequent studies. Compared to their concept of *communitas* my idea of community differs in two important ways. First, in the Turners' approach *communitas* emerges within liminal periods, usually although not limited to ritual processes. That is to be in the state of *communitas* is situational, immediate, concrete and spontaneous. Although the authors claim the possibility of the conversion of *communitas* into norm-governed relationships and broaden the focus from events to everyday occurrences (E. Turner 2012), *communitas* describes a condition beyond the ordinary structure—or in Turners' words anti-structure. In contrast, my focus of *we-ness* highlights the ordinary or unquestioned feeling of belonging. Moreover in the Turners' approach at the moment of the *communitas* *you* and *I* become one. Therefore in comparison to my approach of *we-ness* one could speak of their concept of oneness. This differentiation is important as my idea of *we-ness* implies social relations in two ways: on the one hand relations of *yous* and *Is* among the *we* and on the other hand relations between the own *we* and other *wes*; that is on the one hand to be intelligible and acknowledged as similar and on the other hand to be intelligible and acknowledged as other. Second, in line with the former argument, my concept of *we-ness* is not normative whereas the approach of the Turners' assumes an overall longing for *communitas*. Especially Edith Turners' last writing on *communitas* highlights the humanitarian idea of the concept and thereby neglects conflicts that derive from feelings of belonging as well as the possibility of uneasiness with being part of a *we*. I will draw especially on this issue in the section on boundaries.

- 25 *Die "Wiederkehr des Ungleichen als eines Gleichen"* (Waldenfels 2001, 7).
- 26 See, for example, the breaching experiments of Harold Garfinkel (1967) and Erving Goffman (1963 and 1971). Two recent accounts on the change and dynamics of practices can be found in Schatzki (2013) and Shove et al. (2012).
- 27 With this distinction, Schatzki overcomes the differences and hierarchies between humans and non-humans by means of leaving open whether non-humans have an understanding of themselves.
- 28 Although Schatzki broadens Foucault's (early) focus on discourse and defines people's meaning/identity as practiced phenomena with linguistic aspects. In contrast to Butler, Schatzki focuses to a lesser degree on norms.
- 29 Within practice theory the concept of an actor is widened, taking humans as well as non-humans into account as actors insofar as they make a difference. Whether there is a symmetrical or asymmetrical relation between humans and non-humans is still highly debated.
- 30 For the status of the participant in *The Site of the Social* (Schatzki 2002), see Jansen (2005).
- 31 See also Pfaff-Czarnecka's ideas on simultaneous and changeable belonging, situational multiplicity, and diverse horizons of belonging (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2011, 210).
- 32 Lave and Wenger (1991) introduce the term "community of practice" in their study on situational learning. Lave and Wenger were interested in finding out how newcomers to groups become established members by means of learning through participation. In *Community of Practice*, Wenger (2008) develops the term with a focus on identity. Eventually, Wenger and others (2002) shifted their attention to aspects of knowledge

- management. For a history of the term and concept, see Cox (2005).
- 33 This does not mean that meaning, as the core of cultural theories, is abolished from practice theory. But the status of meaning within practice theory is different. Where constructivism is about representation, knowledge and perception, practice theory is about enactment, embodiment and performance. See, for instance, Mol's (2002) book on ontology in medical practice.
- 34 The importance of the situational context is also put forward in Bauman's approach to performance as entextualization and contextualization (Bauman 2012).
- 35 In this example to study is solely related to a university context. I will leave the various other meanings the verb possesses aside here. Schatzki (1996, 91-110) distinguishes dispersed practices from integrated practices. In line with that, studying as depicted here describes an integrated practice.
- 36 By declaring the practice of studying requires a university, I do not claim that the university as arrangement has to be non-virtual. But a virtual university requires materiality as well.
- 37 Giving presentations during seminar sessions is a good example to show the complexity of the relation between practices and arrangements. In seminars, students as well as lectures are giving presentations. Both *know how to* do that. But according to rules and teleoaffective structures their practices differ.
- 38 For such an analysis, see my article on the same festival (Klückmann 2013).
- 39 In this sense, practice theory offers also ways to transgress the boundary between quantitative and qualitative research. Both Giddens and Bourdieu make an attempt to overcome this opposition in social research and aim at combining quantitative and qualitative methods of research; see, especially, Bourdieu (1984).
- 40 To associate specific words with specific assumptions or naming are examples for repeated sayings respectively discursive practices.
- 41 Mastering a language is often an important aspect of nationality and ethnicity and language courses are one of the most frequently offered activities by immigrant organizations in order to foster national identity.
- 42 While I started writing this article, the case of Rachel Dolezal was widely discussed. Rachel Anne Dolezal is an American civil rights activist and was president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Dolezal identifies herself as black. This became subject of controversy after her parents stated that she had lied about her racial identity. Her case illustrates two things: first, there are certain rules, understandings, ends that need to be followed to be black, and, second, there are others that have to acknowledge a certain person as part of the community. Neither the practices Dolezal followed nor the acknowledgement she tried to reach were within her own power. It would be interesting to look closer at the arguments brought forward to reject her identity as a black woman. Yet, Dolezal's case is not only about becoming a member of a community; it is also about stopping to be a member of a different community. For a summary of the debate and Dolezal's biography, see the article on Wikipedia (2015).
- 43 Compare from Pfaff-Czarneckas argument, that it can be as difficult to leave a community as it is get to get access to a community (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2011, 211).

- 44 For a very well elaborated argument for explorative comparison see Schmidt (2012, 99-129).
- 45 For example Richard Ekins (1997) has displayed how men start to become women and how this is about learning to master techniques of being a woman, including imagining oneself as a woman.
- 46 In naturalization processes, rituals, ceremonies, and performances enjoy a high significance concerning the transformation of the self. See, for instance, Damsholt (2009).
- 47 In *Frames of War*, Butler (2009, 183–184) argues that the subversive potential of iteration lies in its opportunity to reach for the (emergency) brake, to stand still for a moment in the stream of endless becoming. It may be fruitful to have a closer look at cases where people do exactly that.
- 48 The “right to be there” points to Noyes (2012) remarks on the subaltern (body). To ask for the spaces of communities, is a way to trace the subaltern and reveal the social constraints it is subjected to.
- 49 That indicates that the arguments against the mosque within the district could not have been about parking space alone.

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Digitizing Cultural Economies: 'Personalization' and U.S. Quinceañera Practice Online

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Abstract

This article discusses the coming-of-age event known as a quinceañera as symbolic-product marketed by cultural entrepreneurs. The author identifies online resources that affect the real-world practices of the event celebrated amongst U.S.-Latino communities. Drawing on the effects of integrating culturally mediated digital sources among members of contemporary youth generations, the author shows a decline in an emphasis on group identification of ethnicity and race and an increased valuation of generational affiliations in the age-based traditional practice. The author emphasizes the role of consumer-led participation in rearticulating the function of the quinceañera celebration in twenty-first-century U.S.-Latino communities.

From their iced mochas to their tech gadgets and social media profiles, a new generation of Quince girls is simply doing what it knows best: personalizing everything that enters their lives, and a Quinceañera is no exception.
—Hilda Gabriela Hernández, Founder, ModernQuinceañera.com

Digital Culture Influencers

The hot new accessory for the 2015 quinceañera season is honey. Hilda Gabriela Hernández, stylist and self-described “Quinceañera-Guru,” is the media maven behind the quinceañera-themed professional blog, “ModernQuinceañera.com, (MQ). This site caters specifically caters to Latina Millennial consumers eager to create the perfect “modern” quinceañera utilizing their generation’s facility with digital technology and attraction to niche media branding. On June 22, 2015, Hernández shares her advice for creating a natural-themed quinceañera as she simultaneously promotes her new role as spokeswoman for the National Honey Board’s “Sweet Quinceañera” 2015 advertising campaign. From do-it-yourself natural facials to honey-based party favors, Hernández urges her readers to make their events “flawlessly sweet” by patronizing the National Honey Board’s website for further creative inspiration (Hernández 2015, “Sweet”). The web presence of her quinceañera-specific party planning resource makes manifest the entangled relations between Latino traditions, American¹ consumer culture, and digital media.

The above example illustrates emergent patterns of digital cultural practice of middle-income American Latino populations, specifically the intersection of recognizable cultural forms and consumer culture. Ninety-five percent of U.S.-Latinos with a family income of at least \$50,000 use the Internet, and interpret active digital engagement as vital for social and cultural integration in the U.S. (Pew 2013, “Closing the Digital Divide”). This segmentation of Latino communities by income complicates

the practice of quinceañera celebrations by acknowledging distinctions in economic mobility as one factor affecting the character of material performance in the United States. The context of online digital performance implicates the potential for such material manifestations to emerge across the country, rather than being subject to specific limitations of regional or local marketplaces. The quinceañera as practice of consumption is thus connected to a larger national Hispanic marketplace.

The post, “A Sweet Quinceañera with the Honey Board and Me,” is just one of many on the MQ site that recognizes the economic potential of Latino consumers and, in particular, the efficacy of accessing ethnic consumers through tactics that monetize folkloric practices.² It is at the intersection of cultural practice and consumer intervention that I situate this work, focusing on how digital planning services function as new sources of cultural knowledge that impact the shared narrative of quinceañera culture among middle income Latino communities. I will illustrate how the consumer character of online quinceañera promotion fostered in a context of American neoliberal social politics creates a space from which quinceañeras are narrated as “personal” practices, and are implicitly distanced from connections to familiar communalist ideologies. At the same time, the personalization process is itself linked to the social experiences of a broader cohort of U.S.- American peers. Through a process of digital self-education, culture influencers like Hernández are resignifying quinceañera practice as a tool for marketing culture to heritage communities where experts dispense cultural knowledge as a valued symbolic product in short supply.

Hilda-Gabriela Hernández has spent the majority of her career in the field of cultural marketing, focusing explicitly on the niche market of quinceañera promotions. Most recently, she founded the Miss Quinceañera Pageant in California while also developing content for ModernQuinceanera.com (Hernández 2015, “Hilda Gabriela”). Using this online promotional forum, Hernández mobilizes the currency of quinceañera celebrations as indicators of both shared pan-ethnic Latino heritage and upwardly mobile class status, using her platform to appeal to the “next generation of change generators” (Hernández, 2013, “About Miss Quinceañera”). Her work implicitly connects to Marcus Hansen’s third-generation hypothesis, which claims that unlike second-generations, third-generations interpret possessing concrete connections to ethnic heritage as socially advantageous (Gans 1979). The social advantage of having quinceañera knowledge spurs consumer developments around the tradition, shifting the manner in which traditional knowledge is produced and circulated to the newest generation of participants. In order to fully understand implication of the digital consumer intervention into quinceañera practice, we must acknowledge how experiences of race and class affect access to and circulation of certain forms of cultural knowledge in the United States.

Latino Folklore and Cultural Studies Meets Practice Theory

Practice theory has much to contribute to the study of Folklore in U.S.-Latino communities. Studies of the representational practices of Latino populations are most prominently found under the heading Latino Cultural Studies. Such discussions

emphasize the subject-position of practice within communities, and spend less time investigating the object or practice under inquiry, often framing such discourses as “consequences of our own diaspora” (Fregoso and Chabram 2006, 26). The focus on socio-political significance raises awareness of the political stakes of Latino cultural representation in contemporary society. This macro view, which examines practice as a vehicle for emphasizing a kind of “presencing” of marginal communities within larger multivalent, hierarchical social systems, offers a complimentary analytical framework to the micro perspective often undertaken by folklorists examining contexts of locally-peopled small stories of performance (Bhabha 1994, 12). These two frames can potentially use the connective tissue of practice theory to address and fill gaps that methodologies privileging the broadly macro, or the specifically micro tend to overlook.

Drawing attention to Latino cultural practice in the U.S. requires that scholars acknowledge the Eurocentric focus of “American” folklore scholarship. Bronner’s historical overview of practice theory in folklore and folklife studies asserts that methodologies of “American” folklore focus on performance over practice, with the author dividing scholarship between “European” and “American” sources, where American must be read as Euro-American (Bronner 2012, 23). Yet, while the work of scholars and practitioners emerging from the global south is absent in Bronner’s discussion of “American Folklore and Folklife Studies”, the work of folklorists of color in the United States resonates with the practice framework he outlines as emerging from a post-Soviet European context. With an emphasis on practice as a means of understanding “shared experiences within modernity”, this framework articulates the relationship of particular social and cultural groups to the state systems of power (26). Practice, as a repeated iteration of cultural performance, therefore takes on clear significances within communities looking to carve out sustained social and political presence within unequal regimes of power that correlate public visibility with social validity.

From the perspective of Latino Folklore and Cultural Studies, an emphasis on methodologies that foreground notions of practice offer a framework through which we can discuss how individualized cultural performances are rendered part of a collective process of resistance through attention to public creative acts that create communities of practice in the process. Maja Povrzanovic Frykman frames the study of folklore in European ethnological approaches around “communities of experience or communities of practice in places that are shared regardless of origin, and the ‘ownership’ of which is based on everyday use” (2008, 19). This connection of “ownership” to “use” becomes a paradigm that speaks to the complex cultural predicament of U.S.-Latino communities whose experiential realities of ethnic, linguistic, racial, and generational diversity—among other categories of difference—create cleavages around notions of an “authentic” *Latinidad* in the United States. Rather than a focus on origins, the framework of practice predicated on use, particularly shared use, has the capacity to foster discussions of cultural forms that can, at least temporarily supplant divisive arguments over authenticity by focusing on how select

practices are constructed, and how they circulate through shared community contexts. Although notions of circulation have continuously been at the heart of defining folklore as an informal cultural production, it emerges with renewed vigor among twenty-first-century Latino communities whose views on authenticity in cultural practice are often embedded in understandings of how cultural information should move through intimate, co-ethnic spaces resulting in shared practice.

This designation of “shared practice” requires that we interrogate not only the idea of “practice”, which Bronner defines as “observable, comparable actions perceived or presented as traditional”, but also how those practices come to be present among disparate communities through a process of circulation (26). In our present case, circulation is at the crux of our discussion, framing the way in which a Latino cultural form, the quinceañera celebration, is conceptualized as a cultural practice through an investigation into novel avenues through which celebrants are learning how to perform the celebration. An examination of the patterns of quinceañera production in national and transnational contexts creates a space to use practice theory in order to think about the quinceañera beyond its place as a gendered coming-of-age drama. This expanded view contextualizes the quinceañera within a system that prioritizes “social affiliation” over “individually constructed identity” (Bronner 32). In addition, I assert that a process of personalization in quinceañera practice links Latina youth practice to other cross-ethnic age mate peers. While it is not so simple to extricate these two contexts of signification, the social and the individual, from one another, a focus on quinceañera industries available to new generations of quinceañera girls, allows us to think about the collective implications of constructing the quinceañera tradition in 21st century U.S. communities.

In the past, the circulation of knowledge around such traditional practices as quinceañeras occurred in face-to-face contexts. Such a mode of circulation affirmed the celebration’s credibility as a folk tradition defined as it used an ideal person to person channel of communication (Bendix 1997). Young Latinas relied on the knowledge of previous generations of women to help usher them across an imagined threshold diving childhood from young adulthood. This process of knowledge circulation was understood to be tacit, in that young women were exposed to a culture of quinceañera through intergenerational participation—watching sisters and cousins undergo the process, viewing photo albums of mothers or grandmothers, participating in event of their age-mate peers. In this way, quinceañera production falls in line with H. M. Collins’ assertion of “tacit knowledge” as “understanding social and conceptual worlds by looking at practices” (Collins 2001, 107). This conceptualization of how knowledge circulates among co-cultural communities, assumes that to gain specific knowledge by observation one must be already intimately connected to the shared cultural framework in which a practice is contextualized. From a folkloristic perspective, traditional knowledge is that which is passed down through “face-to-face interactions” (Georges and Jones, 1995, 21). As a national community of diverse immigrant identities, U.S.-Latinos have struggled to maintain traditions that depend upon geographic proximity, as such idealized “face-to-face” interactions assume that

communities and families are geographically linked to a home community, or that participants are economically and politically empowered to move between state, national and international bordered spaces. Given the salient histories of tumultuous and violent domestic and international migration and displacement, these two factors cannot simply be assumed by populations identifying as Latinos in the United States.

We must then consider that tacit knowledge, in U.S.-Latino communities whose lines of consistent cultural memory have at times been cut by state sanctioned programs of linguistic and cultural assimilation, may be construed as a kind of luxury good, particularly as this mode of knowledge acquisition is idealized amongst scholars of folklore. For example, a young woman in Ohio who was documenting her quinceañera planning on YouTube by posting videos of her frustrating Google searches of phrases like “quinceañera dress.” In 2011, Paty³ was a fourteen-year-old Cuban American only child of the *only* Latino family in her neighborhood. We connected because I answered a query she posted on a Yahoo forum requesting whether it was appropriate to have a quinceañera even if she had one Latina parent. Her query was brief, but foregrounded that her Cuban mother did not celebrate a quinceañera, and could not offer her a cultural context through which to emplace her positionality as Cuban American into the tradition. Although breaking the proverbial research fourth wall, I felt compelled to write her and explain my research if only to assure her that I had observed many diverse quinceañeras that included girls (and boys) with only one Latino-identifying parent. This query, solidified that a new generation of Latinas is tech savvy but experiences barriers to accessing information about traditional practices, and is looking outside of family networks to online communities for cultural knowledge. A quinceañera emerging from such online queries might have trouble being accepted as traditional by pre-Millennial generations, as its mode of knowledge acquisition is supplemented by popular media and distanced from face-to-face intergenerational contact.

The notion of “distortion” that emerged from interpretations of folklore tainted by popular interpretation and commercialization could not have predicted the use of popular media in promoting the performance of traditional practice of racialized Americans residing at the edges of American folklore study (Dorson 1976, 5). Centralizing the perspective of Latino communities, we can reinterpret this sense of “distortion” by examining it as the inevitable product of liminal social existence that culminates in the creative “restaging of history” from the perspective of oppressed peoples who continue to battle socio-cultural stigma as pathologically undereducated and working-class (Bhabha 1994, 1). Therefore, an examination of innovative social technologies of knowledge circulation among U.S.-Latino communities becomes a vital location through which to examine how notions of authenticity are being refigured through commercial consumption.

The emergence of quinceañera-themed print media in the mid-late twentieth century served as a kind of recuperative process to reeducate U.S.-Latino communities of the quinceañera tradition (King 1998, Lankford 1994, Salcedo 1997). Such texts created formalized, published, English-language guides for constructing U.S.-Latino quinceañera celebrations, often using personal anecdotal experiences as “traditional”.

For example, Elizabeth King's *Quinceañera: Celebrating Fifteen* states, "[it] is traditional" for a quinceañera to be escorted by an "honor court" where "the quinceañera and her escorts make fifteen couples, each couple representing a year in the quinceañera's life" (King 1998, 14). Rhetorically, "Planning guides normalize different numbers of couples as traditional or appropriate," impacting group practice vis-a-vis *textual* authority (González 2014, 41)⁴. The definitive verbal structure of formal printed books requires that King frame her observations as facts. The authority of books and print media does not affect consumer actors as it did in generations past (Benhamou 2015). Such twentieth-century print media paved the way for less fixed but still explicit modes of knowledge circulation in the twenty-first century, such as specialty magazines, and—the most flexible—online platforms where specialized knowledge is continuously updated based on patterns in trending fashion and user-generated commentary.

Once tacitly picked up via observational practices in culturally saturated environments, knowledge is now being sought out in mass media and consumer processes that explicitly mobilize cultural forms to attract specific target audiences. A by-product of this culturally-focused entrepreneurship is the development of new circuits of knowledge that directly influence the practice of living traditions. While theories of practice can help us better understand how practices serve as vehicles of knowledge circulation, as "doing" and "learning" are intertwined to take practitioners from "a state of incompetence" to "a state of competence", the analytical frameworks of Latino Cultural Studies allows us to formulate why acknowledging the method through which U.S.-Latino youth communities are gaining knowledge matters (Collins 107).

Marketing Symbolic Ethnicity

Among US Latino communities, cultural industries surrounding the quinceañera celebration are thriving, appearing in myriad forms across the United States and in online spaces transcending the traditional limitations of brick-and-mortar establishments. While observers would presume that the most prominent quinceañera industry focuses on the ubiquitous gown, the most compelling industry is planning-services that profit from the sale of cultural knowledge. These business serve as knowledge brokers middling quinceañera culture to a new generation of U.S.-Latina youth. Planning services emerged at the turn of the millennium as national marketing agencies began recognizing the value of the Latino consumer and Hispanic Market (Dávila 2001). This moment of cultural value appears to capitalize on the rise of what Gans terms "symbolic ethnicity", or a way of being "self consciously ethnic" in the United States after ethnic experiences of differentiation have been lost to assimilation. Gans frames this state of ethnicity as characteristic of third- and fourth-generation middle-class "ethnics" whose dwindling concrete ties to a home country are often overlooked in favor "working class style" (1979, 6). Among diverse U.S.-Latino communities, it continues to be working class experiences that are foregrounded as quintessentially "Latino" to the detriment of new generations of middle-class Latinos whose experiences are not defined by a shared working-class ethos (Rodriguez 1996).

A discussion of the commercial intervention into contemporary quinceañera traditions acknowledging a shift in ethnic identification also marked by new modes of gaining access to cultural knowledge. This shift in how knowledge is being acquired, requires that we contextualize quinceañera practice beyond individual performance, or even a specific ethnic narrative, and think of its twenty-first-century iterations as part of a larger U.S.-based, neoliberal economic sphere that serves as a bridge between knowledge acquisition and knowledge articulation. Engaging with a Latino Studies perspective, this bridge must be examined as a function of access mediated by patterns of economic mobility that disproportionately affect the lived experiences of Latino populations in the United States. By creating online spaces of commerce specifically tied to the circulation of “rules” of quinceañera practice, cultural entrepreneurs are rearticulating the value of the quinceañera celebration among technologically literate U.S.-Latino youth communities of practice.

I have spent the last eight years conducting ethnographic fieldwork in different regions of the country, interviewing quinceañera girls and their families as well as the new generation of industry professionals. These culture influencers work in cultural economies and are creating and filling the needs of a newly developed brick-and-mortar quinceañera marketplace. Their current existence in the twenty-first-century U.S. economy is the product of the mid-twentieth-century shift toward segmented approaches to marketing to American consumer constituencies that framed distinct ethnic groups as discrete consumer target markets (Halter 2000). However, modern quinceañera industries are not only catering to Latinos as consumers, but are also marketing Latino culture as a product of specific consumption practices. This speaks to the agentic process of creating one’s own sense of cultural inheritance. Halter asserts that before the shift to an ethnically segmented marketplace people connected to objects that were inherited through families (2000, 7). Much like cultural knowledge, cultural objects become difficult for migratory and diasporic communities to maintain, and, therefore, a reconnection to heritage traditions may imply a relationship to a cultural marketplace. The consumer intervention into quinceañera practice, or the availability of quinceañera culture outside of exclusively private cultural spaces, serves as a catalyst for a process of ethnic consumer consumption that both signals a connection to an ethnic history, but also allows consumers to access such heritage outside of “sharply organized...ethnic group boundaries (2000, 7). To gain clarity on how the market is being used to access the quinceañera tradition, we must understand how culture producers are creating marketplaces.

The folkloric framework that posits cultural forms as flexible, situated social texts allows us to question where for-profit culture experts fit into extant social and familial networks of planning. Lash and Urry emphasize how the economy is increasingly becoming “culturally inflected” (1994, 64). Through modes of entrepreneurship, Latino culture experts draw on “soft” knowledge to tap into “non-rational”, or affective modes of marketing that put culture to work in both commercial and symbolic economies (Lash and Urry 1994, 108-109). This is particularly salient in the quinceañera professional industry still developing in the United States where

quinceañera celebrations are both symbolic and material cultural goods. As such, they become part of a competitive market of goods, in which rules and regulations are not dependent on symbolic capacity, but are directly linked to fluctuating social factors of socioeconomic class, geography, ethnic and racial identification, gender identity, citizenship, disposable income, and personal style. A shift in consumer resources that endeavors to draw in the widest swath of Latino participation often seeks to generalize the tradition in the United States, creating an inclusive pan-Latino tradition that deemphasizes elements of difference that might create boundaries between ethnic-national consumer audiences.

Formerly, planning a quinceañera depended on networks of close family and friends to actuate a coming-of-age event. The event that was realized through shared labor and economic support was as much a reflection of her collective community as the celebrant. The personalized and consumer-driven rhetoric found at *ModernQuinceañera.com* (MQ) capitalizes on and implicitly promotes a shift in the twenty-first century practice of quinceañera events in the United States. MQ's thematic posts such as, "What's Your Quinceañera Cake Style?" and "What's the Best Style of Quinceañera Dress for You?" (Hernández, 2015) establish and reflect a desire for customization in a systematic feedback loop, where the role of culture producer and consumer meet and blur. In this context, content is less an original creation and more closely defined as a process that Lawrence Lessig describes as "remixing." Lessig asserts that a remix text develops through processes of innovating content, particularly in the digital sphere, where innovation stems from re-contextualizing cultural references often, without considering the legal repercussions of copyright laws, and that blindness represents a normalized form of cultural literacy (Lessig 2009, 69). This perspective helps us frame notions of "authorized" and "unauthorized" performance of self in a contemporary society where personal expression is rooted in borrowing the ideas of others—some inflected legally, others inflected socially and culturally. In the context of digital quinceañera practice, preexisting cultural images are being recirculated and rebranded through a shift in medium—the digital materializing in real-life events as affecting the content of each consecutive post. Here the cultural world of quinceañera practice is being refigured by online marketing campaigns. Online forums privilege a quinceañera remix over a historicized original and appeal to Latina social subjects who view them as natural extensions of their everyday technological engagements. The influence of online interpretations affects real-world practices, which in turn creates inspiration for innovations in online content.

ModernQuinceañera.com, like other quinceañera online forums, requires the real-life performance and practice of planning for its efficacy as a consumer vehicle. Unlike other modes of online folkloric inquiry that examine the use of digital sources as alternate contexts for the production of new forms of cultural expression, I examine MQ as a hybrid digital space in the service of digital cultural economies.⁵ Its product is "cultural promotion" and as such straddles the online and territorial worlds. MQ uses the networking capacities fundamental to reaching youth audiences living in technological saturation, but at the same time it is fundamentally dependent

upon material enactments of culture for its success. Within a myriad of developing transactional relationships mediated by changes in business and technology, economic organization creates a new system from which the coherence and efficacy of quinceañera ritual practice is judged.

“Modern” Quinceañera Practice

Hilda-Gabriela Hernández’s *Modern Quinceañera* site is a unique example of a digital quinceañera context because nothing is for sale. It has become commonplace for Latina shoppers to do a Google search to seek out a discounted dresses through online retailers and encounter a section of their website that promotes the quinceañera event as a valued cultural tradition, even going so far as to paraphrase interpretations of its origin and significance. Quinceañera retailers recognize the value of contextualizing the cultural significance of potential purchases. MQ, however, is not a retail site. It does not sell dresses or discount bulk invitations or custom quince-sneakers—all of which are purchases that are only a few minutes and a few clicks away regardless of the ethnic composition of one’s neighborhood, city, or state. Instead, MQ provides cultural knowledge to middle-class aspiring, English-dominant Latina youth, seemingly for free. Hernández’s role is promotion of not only the quinceañera as an event, but also the consumer industry that surrounds it, of which she is an active participant. While she is a professional stylist and planner in non-digital spaces, the MQ site functions as a forum that not only promotes but also generates what I call “future-traditional knowledge” through the aforementioned process of remixing. While understanding that traditional practices are those that are tied to past experiences, both material and emotional, that have been pulled through time into the present, the practices being claimed on MQ are a blend of accepted cultural knowledge and innovation vetted for inclusion in the practice of quinceañeras based on their success in a youth-focused marketplace. These practices are informed directly by Hernández’s work with professional designers, stylists, and quince-girls themselves. In this context, while her posts are framed as broadly Latino, they are part of a remixing process directly connected to the character of Latino experiences emerging from identities cultivated in the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area.

Hernández’s informational posts on the MQ blog can be classified into three basic thematically-oriented categories: Accepted Knowledge, Remix-Trends, and Quince-Adjacent. Quince-Adjacent topics are those that the author includes to appeal to audiences, but do not *directly* address some aspect of quinceañera culture. For example, this category includes quizzes devoted to learning “What’s Your Cat Personality” and finally discovering “What Pinterest Breakfast Are You?” (Hernández 2015). Much like our first example post, which asserts that the 2015 season’s most sought after quinceañera accessory is honey, the contents of these posts have no symbolic connection to the quinceañera rite, or ethnic Latino heritage. Instead, these humorous posts are valuable because they contextualize the website firmly in the realm of American teenage popular culture, committed to personalizing cultural productions. They offer a vision of quinceañera consumers as included in the population of “digital natives”

of Generation Z (Benhamau 2015). This marketing demographic, born in 1994 or later, is characterized as unapologetically self-absorbed and shares a need for “constant connectedness” with their Millennial⁶ counterparts (Schneider 2015). I include them in this discussion to direct readers to consider how the notion of cultural authenticity marked by intergenerational ethnic gatekeeping is eroded by the inclusion of posts that disregard the need to constantly employ markers of a monolithic, shared Latino ethnic heritage. This notion of the “authentic” among U.S.-Latino cultural practice resides in assumptions of a shared working-class ethos, and resistance toward Americanization, where “American” is read as Euro-American. In my fieldwork, narratives of “authentic” quinceañera practice were breathed between the lines of every conversation parents shared about their daughters’ disappointing choices in dresses, limousines, food options, and more. Authenticity was an achievement of an event that was recognizably ethnicized, such as by actively including culturally specific food choices and music in Spanish. However, MQ contextualizes details like nineties *cumbia* music as outmoded additions to contemporary events.

Take the song “Mi Cucu” from popular cumbia band La Sinora Dinamita, for example. That song—along with a few other old school Quinceañera songs, were the epitome of a successful Quinceañera (Hernández 2015, “17 signs...”).

Through quince-adjacent posts, Hernández acknowledges the cultural pressures at play in the lives of her audience, speaking to their needs as a consumer market but also circumventing a need to promote an “authentic” quinceañera-product. Her posts, the product of a vocal Latina cultural entrepreneur, implicitly frame quinceañeras as multi-vocal consumer products, rather than cultural events defined by strict ties to singular, overly simplified ethnic markers. In this way, consuming distracting cat-culture online acknowledges Latinos as one offshoot of American youth audiences that are not solely defined by markers of race and ethnicity, even in the context of traditional practice. Here realities of class presentation and access to disposable income become defining factors in contemporary quinceañera practice. This divergence from an easily defined ethnic focus is further reinforced by the way in which MQ frames notions of temporality within the planning of the quince event, as well as how it is focused on youth rather than their parents, and as such is decidedly future-oriented. This orientation toward the Latina youth and original cultural production adds Latino cultural folkloric data to Dundes’ argument supporting the pervasiveness of futurity in a shared American worldview (1969, 57).

Accepted Knowledge

Seven of Hernández’s seventy-nine posts are dedicated to sharing basic information about the quinceañera event—what I refer to as “beginners-posts.” Beginners-posts, unlike others on the site, actively use Hernández’s personal quinceañera experiences to contextualize the tradition in current time. Much like earlier systems of folkloric transmission in which a knowledgeable grandmother might share her reflections on

coming-of-age with her granddaughter, Hernández uses her personal memories to generalize tradition. In a post titled, “17 Signs of a Throwback Quinceañera,” Hernández uses a photo montage to show her audience what quinceañeras used to be like—even including a photograph of herself as a *damita*⁷ standing next to a young woman whose full-length white dress with high collar and full sleeves could have emerged from the court of Louis XIV. Posts like these reinforce the shift in how knowledge is sought out by youth practitioners. Tacit, observable learning has shifted to explicit online-searches. This process of active knowledge acquisition also points to possible trends in Latino community practice, firstly the potential gap in familial knowledge due to a lack of experience. Secondly, the seeking out of such resources may indicate a lapse in familial relationships that would foster intergenerational exchange. Both factors create an opening for online consumer industries to broker knowledge to new generation.

Hernández, who includes the bare minimum of required reading for youth audiences accustomed to absorbing 140-characters or less at a time, shapes the quinceañera as a common memory for those “growing up Latino” (Hernández 2015, “17 signs...”). Online forums such as MQ potentially supplement the lack of memories in certain familial histories offering quinceañera advice that implicates existential crisis faced by Latino youth living interethnic experiences. Hernández’s use of memory calls on narratives of direct cultural contact that offers those distanced from the traditional practice comfort in her advice. The implicit narrative that comes with a playful, even mocking tone is that the “throwback” quinceañera has a singular character, easily enumerated and generalized through direct repetition, rather than being creatively remixed—a skill of contemporary quinceañeras and their attendant industries. For this post, the author organizes a series of photographs from her cousin’s quinceañera from what appears to be the late seventies or early eighties, as ambiguously “old.” The photographs and their jocular commentary offer visual accusations that link wearing white puffy-sleeved dresses, making your own favors, eating traditional regional Latino foods, taking awkward staged photographs with your parents, allowing an overly large quinceañera-court, and assembling decorations made from crepe streamers and balloons as outdated practices in need of remixing. The concept of remixing becomes vital here, since although change is desired, complete replacement is not. Quinceañera industries are still built on flamboyantly decorated gowns, ethnic food options, professional photography, and the choreographed group dance, but just in a new way. These modes of tradition are refigured as practices once dominated by informal relations becoming increasingly formalized. Formalization requires the consideration of ownership and intellectual property as culture producers, who make their living in cultural economies devoting themselves to recasting quinceañera traditions for current audiences. The recasting process requires feedback from audiences cum consumers, rendering ownership shared, but also contingent on the vitality of the consumer marketplace. This contingency, makes creativity precarious, but also reminds us that cultural economies are never fully formal or informal, but always serving both dynamic audiences and marketplaces. In one post, Hernández creates a divide between embarrassingly “old school” and “throwback” events

performed sincerely as antithetical to modern celebrations. To be a modern, “successful Quinceañera” one must both reference and transcend past performances (Hernández 2015, “17 Signs...”).

MQ is an amalgam of posts used to create and promote the professional image and goals of Hernández as a stylist who makes a living brokering quinceañera culture to Latino populations. In the category of Accepted Knowledge, Hernández’s “Throwback” was preceded by two alternate beginners-posts that introduce readers to basic quinceañera knowledge: “Main Quinceañera Traditions Explained” and “List of Main Things You Need for a Quinceañera.” In “Main,” Hernández spends no more than two sentences to explain each of five basic micro-rituals participants can expect during a quinceañera reception. The post includes five “traditions,” including practices of dress and adornment, the last doll,⁸ and the role of the father-daughter dance.⁹ None of these short references includes any manner of historical contextualization or illustrative specific examples. Instead, these posts appear to draw readers into sound bites of cultural knowledge, which begin a technologically-mediated exchange that the reader must complete through their own creativity. The lack of specificity in these texts creates a need and/or desire to explore the site further or in extreme cases, contact Hernández and solicit her formal, in-person planning expertise. Where doing and learning are intertwined to take practitioners from “a state of incompetence” to “a state of competence”, these posts open up discussions of the past only to foreground current trends in practice and the capacity of each participant to intervene in those practices through their own planning and execution (Collins 107).

Beginners-posts draw in those eager to learn and then supplement their cultural education with rhetorics of style that link them with innovations in consumption that have come to characterize current cultural practice. Posts often end with links cross-referencing similarly-themed supplemental posts. So while you might be laughing at unfamiliar “throwback” styles, you can easily click your way to current trends by designers being promoted on the MQ site. This cross-referencing frames readers as active consumers, vetting products within the digital cultural economy of quinceañera under the creative control of Hernández and her MQ site staff. The primacy of the present illustrated by the limited reference to previous generations not only reinforces particularly self-interested generational perspectives but also de-historicizes the significance of a quinceañera event. An intense focus on the here and now renders the traditional event as traditional in name only. While MQ uses the past as a reference point, it does so as more of a counter example than inspiration. I have witnessed versions of this type of advice in circulation around the U.S. in brick-and-mortar quinceañera professional contexts. Rendering the present as more important than the past is common rhetorical footing used to court Latino youth generations who find themselves relating better to cross-cultural age peers than to a fantasy of intergenerational pan-Latino solidarity. Due to shared consumer patterns, practices of coming of age such American “Sweet 16” celebrations are invoked as similar to the quinceañera, a sentiment implicitly apparent in the common use of the English moniker “Sweet 15”. Therefore, establishing a connection to a shared past becomes

unnecessary to appeal to the twenty-first-century youth quinceañera consumer. This pattern of future-orientation in the planning of quinceañera events, at least for new permeations of participants, need not index memories of past events, nor should it. The quinceañera is no longer a cultural mnemonic. References to past patterns of practice become inevitable incidentals, not central goals of the planning process. However, even with a draw toward the present for inspiration, it is a selective present perspective that is encouraged.

Unlike other online quinceañera resources, MQ does not promote a peer-to-peer forum. These sites often lose their appeal quickly, as immature or spam posts clutter already slow-moving conversations between individuals. Instead, MQ offers readers brief posts and encourages direct communication with Hernández and her staff of editors, as well as continually streaming commentary and visual engagement on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram where Hernandez has just under 5,000 combined followers. The collective body of beginners-posts, which make up a minority of the site's archive, appear to be of minimal importance to the "modern" quinceañera. Instead, rather than looking back, Hernández spends her time encouraging her audience to embrace the present in order to create the future.

Remix-Trends

Fifty-three of MQ's available posts are devoted in some way to sharing new trends in quinceañera style to eager audiences of Latina identifying readers. The posts create a body of texts that illustrate innumerable ways that American quinceañera culture is constantly under the creative construction of a range of professionals from designers working on runway fashion shows to journalists reporting on domestic disturbances at quinceañera events (Hernández 2015, "April Black Diamonds"; Hernández 2014, "Quinceañera Piñata..."). Mediated by different forms of interaction, which include videos, reposted news stories, visual "do's and don'ts" lists, and the occasional narrative story, Hernández's vision seems more apparent in the arranging and presenting of myriad forms of communication rather than the construction of completely new content. The quinceañera serves as a responsive, flexible vehicle through which to reach a growing Latino consumer base. Her key message is that of personalization.

On September 15, 2014, Hernández synthesizes her ideological connection to the quinceañera event as a "personalization of culture." In a post titled, "How Today's Quinceañeras are Personalizing their Hispanic¹⁰ Heritage," Hernández states that the quinceañera tradition as it is filtered through familial and informal sources is "not true to all Quinceañeras' lifestyles" (Hernández 2014, "How Today's..."). Here Hernández channels Pierre Bourdieu, attesting that to conceptualize the quinceañera practice, one must honestly assess the connection between lived behaviors and standardizations and economic systems in place to constrain them (Bourdieu 1998, 96; Parkin 1997, 375). Her statement is profound as it directly identifies the chasm between many lived experiences of Latino youth and the programmatic traditions that are assumed to represent their lives. She speaks for a generation of Latinas whose materialistic focus is often criticized by older generations as both self-involved, but more offensively,

as Americanized. Hernández explains that the desire to personalize the quinceañera is not a fault of a new generation, but an adaptation of lived experiences that vary from previous generations, made apparent in the heightened ritual planning process that reveals the complex and contentious negotiations between intergenerational values. The material culture of the quinceañera is composed of "...services that can (and are) customized to fit the birthday girl's personal taste" (Hernández 2014, "How Today's..."). She credits the character of this planning process as being "...due to the fact that young girls are growing up in an era where they can personalize everything they consume." This statement, rather than lamenting a loss of traditional values, reframes Latina youth experiences as American experiences, in particularly formed by American neoliberal capitalism that trains populations to filter their world through a process of consumer satisfaction, then to post that filtered image on social media for the world to see. Hernández boldly states:

From their iced mochas to their tech gadgets and social media profiles, a new generation of Quince girls is simply doing what it knows best: personalizing everything that enters their lives, and a Quinceañera is no exception (Hernández 2014, "How Today's...").

While her statements unapologetically integrate quinceañera practice into American cultural capitalism as an organic, community-driven process, one cannot forget that she profits from these realizations. Her direct gains come from her labor as a quinceañera stylist and product promoter, her site and her work build something far beyond the individual events she creatively engineers and the professional relationships she cultivates. MQ as a cultural text reveals a relationship between industry professionals and consumers that rivals previous generations' connection to patterns in family-oriented practice. This change, rather than framed as loss, can be viewed as a lateral shift from informal to formal economic relations contextualizing twenty-first-century Latino cultural forms into "neoliberal reconversion of culture" where cultural heritage is increasing privatized, and enacting it is a calculated decision (Colleredo-Mansfeld 2002, 160). Framing the quinceañera as a social asset, in line with Halter's claim that third- and fourth-generation ethnics reframe cultural differentiation as compatible with "middle class respectability" (2000, 9). Contemporary neoliberalism creates a new constraining factor in patterns of quinceañera practice. Previously the systems of influence surrounding the event were local and did not expect or desire to appeal to wider national audiences. However, with technological saturation that leads to digitally-connected lives constantly on display beyond local and family networks, quinceañeras are responding to the pressure of different systems of influence. MQ represents such a system. In the context of remixing traditional practice with trends in representations that transcend ethnic-national divisions, professional industries gain the capacity to systemize quinceañera expectations. Hernández's work does more than promote new modes of dress or musical choice; her trail of posts, accompanied by her personal branding, claims the quinceañera as a symbolic product rather than a cultural form or item of folklore alone.

As material consumption mediates ethnic identity expressed in the United States, we must consider what impact consumer intervention has on the affective character of the quinceañera event. Grant McCracken explores consumer practice as cultural practice, and from him I mobilize the term “symbolic product” to discuss how purchased goods are symbolically reevaluated as they are contextualized in home spaces (McCracken 2005, 27). I reinterpret the term to refer to the transformation of the quinceañera from an item of informal culture to one that continues to maintain symbolic value, but is also specifically affected by a formalized consumer process of digital cultural economies.

An “Unhomey” Quinceañera

In considering how the quinceañera is emerging in contemporary consumer systems, particularly those in dynamic online contexts, one cannot escape a question of the implications of “sentiment” within changing traditional practices. Here we return to the impact of shifting circuits of knowledge on the practice of twenty-first-century quinceañeras.

Quinceañeras have an affective quality in their production and their execution. The emotional ramifications of even momentary certainty in bodily presentation for who one is, through choices in body and event design, on the verge of change speaks to a celebrant’s need to feel in control of a pronounced moment of social and biological transition. The quinceañera rite has been framed as a place where communities come together and are created through a co-presence of shared labor and emotional investment (González 2014, 42). This response was primarily the product of familiar agents coming together personally around a single individual to mark a moment of personal transformation that was both a shared victory and a shared responsibility. However, as the quinceañera event is increasingly monetized, the event’s character has shifted, particularly visible in patterns of planning. If one imagines the quinceañera as a form of folklore and symbolic property, one whose meaning is no longer solely rooted in networks of family, the personal significance of the event appears to shift as well.

In following McCracken’s notion of “homeyness,” I claim that that through an ongoing process of institutionalization, the quinceañera event’s attractiveness no longer lies in its capacity to integrate a new member into the collective experience of society, but rather to set them on a path of individualization. “Homeyness,” as McCracken describes it, is an affective relationship with consumer goods, where purchased objects are stripped of their “commercially assigned meanings” as they are personalized and integrated into one’s home-space. In his view, when an object’s value is rearticulated in intimate space, it becomes informal, perceptually becoming “reassuring” and even “riskless” (McCracken 2005, 38). Many might consider these material flourishes as what gives a house the sense of home. I propose that the consumer intervention into planning quinceañera celebrations refigures the goals of a quinceañera celebration as decidedly *unhomey*.

This unhomey quality is a product of compromise among contemporary communities whose cultural knowledge is being supplemented by consumer industries, whose investments in the celebration are precariously linked to relevance in the marketplace. While the functionality of quinceañera events was materially linked to family engagement and creative co-production, the intervention of consumer industries has the potential to modify the function of the celebration in multiple ways. First, although informal networks of family shared knowledge through generations, the formalization of blog posts creates an authoritative information loop generated using neoliberal cultural logics that create distance between families, and intimacy with industries. Even short posts become a digital written record, vetted by culture experts and integrated into the real-world practices of celebrants. Second, this form actively disarticulate events from specific ethnic identification, creating a common “Latino” community of practice. While this is unifying in a national context, the loss of inter-ethnic markers does a disservice to Latino communities whose new immigrant status render them subordinate to the majority narrative of more established Latino populations. This process complicates narratives of authenticity, as the celebration becomes generically Latino. Lastly, an American neoliberal logic privileges a forward thinking Latino consumer market that prioritizes present and future-oriented thinking among communities, minimizing the usefulness of quinceañeras as historical mnemonics. As consumer intervention supplements a lack of personal and communal narratives around quinceañera events, it also erodes the mnemonic capability of the event, as participants cannot contextualize themselves in a larger narrative of family and community history. These three results of consumer intervention shift how the quinceañera potentially functions among U.S.-Latino communities of practice. Individualized performances unite young Latinas within a framework of American integration through a process of consumption where identities are constructed through commodities. However, rather than seeking commodities to articulate relationship to the past, they restage the past by explicitly ethnicizing middle class consumption through the marketing of tradition. Quinceañera events represent a brand of customizable social currency that allow Latina youths an innovative way to market their personal social value as both an ethnic minority and social majority. In this context, quinceañeras, though joyous occasions, are anything but “reassuring” or “riskless.” They represent a social struggle for idealized *personal* visibility, mediated by the pressures of ethno-cultural acceptance and an alienating process of consumer integration. Although seemingly sad, this assessment allows observers to focus on how Latino communities are performing identity in culturally unauthorized ways. One must ask, however, whose “culture” are we actually using as a point of reference, and just what makes up that culture?

Marginally authorized acts of consumer practice mobilized by quinceañeras of Generation Z foreground national identity over ethnic-national identity. The digital consumer intervention creates a quinceañera event that does not prioritize cultural nostalgia or the emotional needs of an audience, but instead privileges individual identification. A transformation is possible because, although it is popular, quinceañera

rites are not a *requirement* of Latino community identification, merely a benefit. As such, rather than a “rite of passage,” it might be more accurate to categorize the event as a “rite of initiation” (Sims and Stephens 2005, 119). Here, rather than being initiated into a community of ethnic peers, Latina youth are being incorporated into a brand of American cultural citizenship predicated on consumer status. Latina social subjects are making and unmaking Latino cultural worlds as the byproduct of their unique engagement with generationally specific practices in the digital cultural economy. As cultural economies surrounding the quinceañera tradition continue to grow and change, the consumer ritual that characterizes the twenty-first-century planning process will be an intense site to observe the rite’s role as a strategy of status unfolding in the digital age and on a global stage.

Rethinking Circuits of Knowledge and Digital Environments

The goal of this work has been to consider new ways that cultural knowledge is being circulating around twenty-first-century technologically literate Latino communities. Drawing specific attention to shifts in modes of circulation, in particular the online quinceañera blog *ModernQuinceanera.com*, I consider how theories of practice, especially notions of tacit knowledge systems, can be used to investigate the stakes of a shift from face-to-face to digitally mediate forms of knowledge circulation among Latina youth searching for quinceañera guides online. Online forums offer a vital resource for third-generation, English-dominant Latinas who desire to engage with the practice of quinceañera as an expression of their Latina heritage, but desire to supplement their own knowledge about the celebration. The MQ blog serves as one example of a system of online digital forums where traditional knowledge about quinceañera coming-of-age celebrations meets neoliberal consumer capitalism. While these spaces define themselves as contemporary resources, their narratives cannot be disentangled from their consumerist goals. A microanalysis of the organizational schema of MQ’s quinceañera blog posts reveals how knowledge systems implicating rules of modern quinceañera tradition in the U.S. are necessarily being made explicit by cultural entrepreneurs who benefit from articulating formerly tacit cultural knowledge. The site represents one node of a larger commercial project that blends digital and brick-and-mortar quinceañera services where rather than being shared, cultural entrepreneurs are marketing cultural knowledge. The presence of such services make manifest the ways in which U.S. Latinas are seeking out commercial resources to aid in traditional practices. And although a connection with the capitalist marketplace does create a sense of alienation between new iterations of the coming-of-age celebration and the expectations of generations whose celebrations were centralized in particular family histories, it reinforces new patterns of knowledge acquisition that characterize twenty-first-century folkloric practice. While broad conversations of “ethnic” cultural productions have asserted generalizing principles of the role of commodity acquisition and identity formation, the stakes are particularly salient for U.S. Latinos whose identities are over generalized as pathologically working class and willfully un-American. Quinceañera planning services highlight how American Latinos are

resignifying cultural traditions as signs of class mobility predicated on narratives of consumer entitlement. Future studies would benefit from a wider lens of practice, to see if the trend in cultural marketing affecting quinceañera practice permeates other genres of U.S.-Latino folklore. Such a classification expands the function of the celebration beyond localized interpretation of gender identification and family values, while also stressing new complications regarding affective alienation, as celebrations focus more on consumer value than cultural significance. However, I assert that the explicit narratives of personalization promoted through the MQ blog speak to a kind of Latina middle-class re-visioning process that foregrounds Latina entrepreneurs and Latina consumers at the center of a traditional discourse, a new model for extra-familial female social networking, formerly framed around hetero-patriarchal values. While this assertion is still in a state of flux, as new generations of both entrepreneurs and practitioners enter the scene, what is certain is that through growing connections digital economies of practice, U.S.-Latinos are making explicit their solidified place to the American cultural marketplace.

Notes

- 1 Here, "American" specifically refers to U.S. cultural contexts.
- 2 For further ways in which Latino folklore texts are used to access Latino markets in the U.S. see Domino R. Perez's *There Was a Woman: La Llorona from Folklore to Popular Culture* (2008, 60).
- 3 "Paty" is a pseudonym to protect the identity of this minor who participated in my work with the limited permission of her parents.
- 4 In an attempt to reinforce the event's symbolic structure, courts of honor are often composed of seven maids and seven escorts, creating fourteen couples and making the quinceañera and her escort the *fifteenth* couple. However, depending a family's wishes, courts can be larger or smaller. In contemporary contexts, young women are also choosing to exclude courts-of-honor, or populating them with solely female or male escorts. Changes in this aspect of the tradition can vary by family size, class contexts, or variable idiosyncratic rationale.
- 5 For a discussion of the legacy of commercial and technological intervention in American Folklore study see Buccitelli (2014).
- 6 "Millennials" is a term used to refer to marketing demographic of youth and adults born between the early 1980s and early 1990s. This group is considered the first generation of digital natives, having grown up with enhanced social networking technology.
- 7 *Damita* translates to "little maid" in Spanish. She is a young girl who stands as part of the quinceañera court, wearing a coordinating formal dress often matching that of the quinceañera. She serves as a reminder of the quinceañera's fleeting girlhood. She is often misinterpreted as the equivalent to the "flower girl" in an American wedding ceremony.
- 8 The "last doll" is a doll that is part of the ritual objects gifted to a quinceañera during her event. It is often dressed in the same color or style as the quinceañera girl, and has the dual job of representing the final vestiges of childhood, but also the potential responsibilities of adult womanhood and childbearing.
- 9 For detailed ethnographic examples of quinceañera event rituals, see Cantú (1999).
- 10 Less than a handful of MQ site titles include the ethnic moniker "Hispanic," "Latino," or other ethno-national distinction.

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Hybrid Tactics and Locative Legends: Re-reading de Certeau for the Future of Folkloristics

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In his call for a closer merger of the practice and performance approaches that have characterized European ethnology and American folkloristics respectively, Simon Bronner persuasively argues that a reconsideration of the role of practice theory in folklore studies and ethnology may offer a way to more richly understand the connections between individual past and present action and between the individual actor and the collective tradition. While Bronner builds his argument primarily on the work of two key practice theorists, Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens, folklorists and ethnologists would also benefit from a more detailed and robust consideration of the works of a different theorist, Michel de Certeau, whose work constitutes a different take on the idea of practice. I make this case partly because, as a wide body of scholarship already suggests, de Certeau's unique sensitivity to everyday operations within the totalizing forces of modernity make his work a natural basis for developing a rich understanding of vernacular cultures in our current heavily mediated and commercialized neoliberal societies (for example, Jenkins 1992; 2009; Manovich 2009). But perhaps more importantly, I make this case because de Certeau himself made what American scholars would call folklore and folklore studies a centerpiece of his intellectual opus. Despite the widespread popularity of certain Certeauian concepts in American folkloristics, the centrality of folklore and folkloristics in his work has been all but overlooked.

A close reading of de Certeau's corpus of scholarship reveals his longstanding interest in folklore along two distinct lines. First, tied to his critical historical evaluation of the development of scholarly epistemology in the context of modernity, de Certeau traces the emergence and evolution of the powerful ideologies that shaped the "modern" discipline of folklore studies, especially in France, and examines how this ideological process has operated on our understanding of culture more broadly. I make the case that de Certeau understood this work on the historical development of folklore studies as vital to the understanding of his larger theoretical program, both because he reiterates and reexamines these issues in a number of his significant works, and because he tied this same history to his critique of the history of secularism, a matter that--despite his professional move away from the clergy--remained a key issue for the Jesuit scholar throughout his career.

With this historical understanding in place, I will then discuss how it is tied importantly, if sometimes tacitly, to de Certeau's generalized framework for understanding the everyday sociocultural experience of individuals living within

modernity's terrain of power. Much of this discussion is drawn from his most famous work in the English-speaking academy: *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1988a), a work that is intimately tied to understanding of what he often refers to as "the popular," but which can easily be understood as analogous to what American scholars might call "folklore."¹ Deepening this discussion by linking it to some of his other more historical work, I will also present aspects of his broad framework within the context of the often overlooked second volume of this work, in which several of his colleagues discuss their ethnographic work within this broad frame.

Finally, I will offer a critique of de Certeau's generalized framework on the basis that it tended to overemphasize, or at least has often been understood in a way that overemphasizes the everyday experience of individuals in modernity, to the detriment of a richer understanding of the vernacular relations between the individual and the social. In that vein, I will discuss one of de Certeau's most well-known concepts, the idea of walking as a kind of expressive tactic, in the context of geospatial digital technology. Using two key examples drawn from geospatial digital technology use in the Boston area that reflect some of the diverse contexts in which vernacular expressions and everyday interactions take shape, I will show the way in which de Certeau's concept should be usefully expanded to make room for a more robust examination of vernacularity in both online and offline spaces, and how this expression, in turn, opens up space to reconsider one of the central concepts of performance theory: the event.

A Brief Take of the American Folkloristic Reception of De Certeau

Since its publication in English, de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* has impacted a variety of works by American folklorists, especially those focused on the study of space and place or media. The concepts developed in *The Practice* (or its precursor essay "On the Oppositional Practices of Everyday Life," 1980), such as the distinction between strategies and tactics, as well as de Certeau's thinking on consumption and resistance, and movement in urban spaces, have frequently been cited in the works of American folklorists.² Despite this, its common use has not generally been linked to de Certeau's broader thinking about folklore or the history of folkloristics.

"The disproportionate success of *The Practice of Everyday Life*," writes Ian Buchanan, "has...cast a shadow over everything else that de Certeau has written, such that it is read either in exclusion of the rest of the oeuvre or as its hermeneutic keystone" (Buchanan 2000, 3). This is no less true in folkloristics than in other cultural disciplines. In large part, folklorists have been content to simply adapt Certeaudian ideas about consumption and expression, strategies and tactics, space and place, to the study of folkloric expression that takes shape within the institutional constraints of contemporary structures of power.³

This is not to say that folklorists have not made good use of these concepts, or that they have not occasionally dipped into other pieces of his scholarship. And certainly the concepts developed most prominently in *The Practice of Everyday Life* are among the most compelling statements of de Certeau's thinking about the "popular,"

“folklore,” or the “everyday” in his oeuvre. But, it is notable that de Certeau’s long and prominently placed concern for folklore and folklore studies has gone largely unremarked upon by the very scholars who might best be qualified to further develop or contend with his ideas.

There are exceptions, of course, to this general trend.⁴ One of the most notable is Harris Berger and Giovanna Del Negro’s consideration of de Certeau in *Identity and Everyday Life* (2005). Though only developing a brief discussion of the application of de Certeau in the study of everyday life, mainly confined to his thinking about resistance and power, Berger and Del Negro do note of the two volumes *The Practice of Everyday Life* that their

[C]onnections with folklore studies are not accidental. A careful reading of volume one of *The Practice* reveals de Certeau’s awareness of both the classics of European folklore (Vladimir Propp and Antti Aarne; see de Certeau [1974] 1984, 19) and the early statements of performance theory in American folklore (Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer; see de Certeau [1974] 1984, 81, 217 n.4). Likewise, in volume two of *The Practice* de Certeau et al. describes the methodology of folklore research as “the socioethnographic analysis of everyday life” and explicitly cites these methods as one of the bases of their project. ([1980] 1998)⁵

What follows in the next section, then, will not necessarily be revelatory to those folklorists who have long engaged with de Certeau’s theoretical program; instead, it will hopefully deepen and expand upon the existing readings of de Certeau’s work by tying it to other elements of his oeuvre. Notably, however, it will attempt to perform a kind of reversal of the dynamic noted by Buchanan: it will re-read *The Practice of Everyday Life* in light of other elements of de Certeau’s scholarship.⁶

The Beauty of the Dead: A History of Folklore Studies

“In recent years, especially since 1960, scholarship in the service of popular culture has been of Marxist inspiration, or at least ‘populist’ in spirit,” de Certeau, Dominique Julia and Jacque Revel wrote in a 1980 essay, “but does the scientific *operation* it undertakes obey different laws than it did in the past? On the contrary, it seems to be dominated by the mechanisms of age-old excommunications...to conceal what it claims to show” (de Certeau 1986, 121).

This opening statement encapsulates much of de Certeau’s thinking about the history of folklore studies. Tracing its development in successive stages from the late eighteenth century to the “heyday of folklore” in France’s Third Republic (1870-1940), the authors argue that the eighteenth century aristocratic vogue for “the popular” concealed a powerful movement toward the domination of the peasantry. This movement involved both exotification and suppression, under a cloak of celebration. “The idealization of the “popular,” as they put it, “is made all the easier if it takes the form of a monologue. The people may not speak, but they can sing...The intent [of folklorists] is *both* to *collect*...and to *reduce* (de Certeau 1986, 122).

It is, then, the emergence of a conceptualization of and procedure for the preservation and study of folklore that signals the death of vernacular culture as an alternative locus of power, at least in the overt sense, to the culture of the elite. Folklorists, de Certeau, Julia, and Revel argue, in a dynamic Barbara Kirhsenblatt-Gimblett (1998, 299-300) would later refer to as part of “folklore’s crisis,” “arrive at the moment a culture has lost its means of self-defense” (de Certeau 1986, 123). This combination of obsessive preservation combined with the shattering dominance predicated on the insertion of power into the everyday gave rise to what the author call the “castrating cult of the people,” a designation that could just as easily be applied to de Certeau’s thinking about the contemporary cultural studies of the 1970s as they could to the study of the popular at the end of the 18th century.

The governing ideologies driving the emergence of this obsession with the folk were not static, however, and therefore, in order to understand the development of the politics of culture in folklore studies, scholars must examine, at each point, its “subjacent postulates” (de Certeau 1986, 123). For instance, following the domination imbricated with the origins of folklore studies in the 18th century, by the mid-nineteenth century, the authors describe folklore as taking on a paternalist role vis-à-vis its subject. The collection of folklore by this time, embodied especially in the works of Charles Nisard (1808-1890), is not just a chronicle of its elimination by the elite, but a protective function executed by the elite on behalf of the incompetent peasant. In this view, de Certeau and his colleagues observe, “the people are *children* whose original purity it is befitting to preserve by guarding them against evil readings” (de Certeau 1986, 124, original emphasis).

Yet, in an odd twist of fate, the emergence of “folklore studies” as a fully formed professional disciplinary practice in France in the 1870s developed this paternalist logic into an even more complex ideological system:

[I]ts intent was to situate, reconnect, guarantee. What interested it was almost the opposite of censorship: reasoned integration. Popular culture was thus defined as patrimony, in accordance with a two-pronged grid that was both historical (the intrapolation of themes guarantees a historical commonality) and geographical (their general presence throughout a certain space bears witness to the cohesiveness of that space)...Thus secured, the popular domain ceased to be the disquieting world Nisard worked so hard to exorcize and confine less than a quarter century before. Folklore ensured cultural assimilation of a henceforth reassuring museum. (de Certeau 1986, 124)

This, then, is the basic outline of de Certeau’s historical critique of both the conceptualization of folklore and the discipline of folklore studies, as well as the core of his critique of cultural studies in the late 20th century.

Interestingly, however, it is also the core of his larger understanding of the workings of modernity. As Tom Conley has observed, de Certeau saw a close link between the historical development of folklore studies and the larger ideological framework imposed by Enlightenment modernity:

Enlightenment comes of exclusion; what is “repressed” then surfaces in mystical expression....As time proceeds, areas that are associated with folklore – regional hagiographies, local legend, communal practices that resisted or took place alongside formal institutions posed by centralized power from without– become part of a mystical heritage. (Conley 1988, xii)

In other words, whether through an exotification of the “folk” or a conversion of religion into “mysticism,” modernity marginalized these alternative loci of cultural power. Not destroying them outright, they instead come to stand outside of formal structures of knowledge (and, thus, in some ways everyday experience) and can only be comprehended by the scholarly “monologue” that is produced to recontextualize them on behalf of the public.⁷ For example, de Certeau, speaking of the history of economic, social, and political rationalization, points out that, through this process, “[a] rift is thus cut between reason and its ‘remainder’ -or between the discourses of *action* and the more or less exploitable mass of *sayings* lacking ‘force’” (de Certeau 1988b, 170-171, original emphasis).

It was within this larger understanding of the modern ideologies of secularization starting in the 17th century, then, that de Certeau would later place his critical history of folklore studies, an epistemological history he sees as in many ways analogous to the history of secularization and also placed within it. Understanding the situatedness of his critique here is crucial for several reasons. Most pragmatically, it speaks to the importance de Certeau attributes to folklore and folklore studies within the history of modernity by linking it to the area that was perhaps of the greatest interest to him: the de-centering of religion in modern life. As Ian Buchanan has observed, the religious dimensions of de Certeau’s work are both a key to its comprehension and often overlooked. “It is like a thorn in the side of strictly secular critics,” Buchanan writes, “they want to use his insights and methods but don’t know how to handle his religious conviction so they suppress it” (Buchanan 2000, 11). Developing a similar line of argumentation, Joseph Moingt argues that de Certeau’s entire historiographical project is founded on the basis of his rootedness in Christian teachings. Pointing out de Certeau’s understanding that “history...functions on the basis of absence that it works to fill,” Moingt argues that, “the whole *oeuvre* of Michel de Certeau is the story of the ‘Abrahamic journey’ that goes from the experience of God to that of the ‘quotidian’, this latter being the challenge thrown down to the former, but also its resource, when the experience of absence finds its being satisfied by the desire that maintains it” (Moingt 1996, 482-3, original italics).

De Certeau’s linking of the forces that broke apart religion as a viable alternative to the Enlightenment, to the forces that similarly shattered and suppressed folk culture, go a long way to suggest the importance that he accorded to the study of folklore and its disciplinary development in his larger intellectual system. On a broader level, however, this link is also important because the basic understanding of how the marginalizing structures inherent in modernity operated on religion and folklore, should now be expanded to all aspects on our everyday experience.

“Marginality,” as de Certeau has famously put it “is today no longer limited to minority groups, but is rather massive and pervasive; this cultural activity of the non-producers of culture, an activity that is unsigned, unreadable, and unsymbolized, remains the only one possible for all those who nevertheless buy and pay for the showy products through which a productivist economy articulates itself” (de Certeau 1988a, xvii). Therefore, it is only within this carefully developed historical framework, predicated on an understanding of the historical processes of the secularization and “folklorization” of culture, that de Certeau ultimately offers his familiar arguments about the everyday “ways of operating” from within the structures of modernity.

Local Stabilities and Locative Legends: Understanding De Certeau *on* Folklore

To understand de Certeau’s theoretical program for the study of culture against the backdrop of his historical thinking is important both because of the richness it adds to our picture of de Certeau’s scholarship, but also because it highlights the productive aspects of his historical critique. As Ben Highmore points out, de Certeau’s thinking about the ideological constructions of the scholarly work in general, including the history of folkloristics and ethnology, were not simply morbid reflections on the past crimes of scholarship. Instead, de Certeau uses these observations as both cautionary tale and suggestive model for future scholarly endeavors. As Highmore puts it:

The epistemological position of [de Certeau’s] ‘scriptural economy’ is designed... to solicit two attitudes. One is a recognition of the unavoidable complicity that is attendant on all forms of scholarly work. This shouldn’t be self-flagellating guilt, but as an epistemological reminder, one designed to bring humility into the business of scholarly work and to increase an epistemological commitment to the real. The other attitude is an epistemological optimism that is not only aimed at the past and the ethical obligation to hear lost voices, but also aimed at the future and the possibility of a different archetectonics of the archive that might allow a multitude of voices to be much more than a chorus of roaring silence: to make culture hospitable to the voices that inhabit it. (Highmore 2006, 93)⁸

This “archetectonics of the archive,” Highmore points out, is predicated on tracing the existing silences in scholarly works. By exposing, in de Certeau’s terms, this “negative silhouette of the problematics displayed black on white in scholarly books,” scholars can explore a “geography of silence” or a “geography of the eliminated” (de Certeau 1986, 131). While acknowledging that “any organization presupposes repression,” de Certeau offers hope for the possibility that there may be a form of organization that does not function “according to a hierarchical social distribution of cultures” (de Certeau 1986, 136).

If de Certeau was hopeful about the possibility of finding paths to include previously excluded voices, even if only by tracing their absence, the actual inclusion of specific voices or the consideration of the diverse details of human sociocultural experience

does not loom large in first volume of *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Instead, this volume, as Pierre Mayol observes was largely, “working on objects carved out of the social field in only a speculative way (*the neighborhood, the everyday life*)” (de Certeau 1998, 8). This is, of course, part of what the second volume, written mainly by Mayol and Luce Giard but supervised by de Certeau, was intended to do: to particularize the general theory offered in the first volume.⁹

However, Ian Buchanan notes that one feature that makes de Certeau’s work distinct from other contemporary approaches is its attention to the general, standing outside of any specific politics of identity. “Unlike the current trend among cultural studies thinkers,” Buchanan observes, “de Certeau did not interest himself in the politics of identity...[his] interest was rather in the impersonal, the non-individual, that which spoke through the individual subject, rather than what he or she thought or had to say” (Buchanan 2000, 97).¹⁰

While it is true that de Certeau’s writing seems largely unconcerned with specific individuals (or the politics of identity after the fashion of Marxist-inspired cultural studies), we should also attend to the fact that his writings depict the conditions of modernity as largely fracturing cohesive social life.¹¹ Accordingly, we note, the tactical practices to which de Certeau’s general theory (and even its application) pay so much attention are largely construed as individualized activities. Walking in the city, reading, cooking: all of these can be social activities, of course, but in de Certeau’s writings, they clearly are not. Instead, they stand in for a disappeared or disappearing sociocultural life. As de Certeau phrases it in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, in the contemporary situation, “[i]ncreasingly constrained [by technical systems], yet less and less concerned with these vast frameworks, the individual detaches himself from them without being able to escape them and can henceforth only try to outwit them, to pull tricks on them.” However, importantly he also observes that, “[t]hese ways of reappropriating the product – system, ways created by consumers, have as their goal a *therapeutics for deteriorating social relations* and make use of techniques of re-employment in which we can recognize the procedures of every day practices” (de Certeau 1988a, xxiv, original emphasis).

Picking up on this aspect in de Certeau’s work, Simon Bronner observes that a de Certeauian view suggests that, “[f]olk culture can be read in the reference to “local stabilities,” which... “break down . . . , no longer fixed by a circumscribed community” (de Certeau 1984, xx), [and hence] [f]olklore is a form of marginalised cultural production” (Bronner 2012, 36).

In one sense, then, as Bronner argues here and as we saw above, marginalized cultural forms, those such as religious thinking and folklore, which de Certeau saw as historically marginalized in similar ways, have now become the norm. In the current condition of modernity, *all* forms of everyday culture have become marginal, and hence susceptible to tactical use. And yet, building on Bronner’s excerpting on de Certeau, we should also see that with the breakdown of circumscribed community and local stabilities, everyday culture is executed only on an *ad hoc*, individualized

scale. As Yoni Van Den Eede has observed, the development and expansion of the technological systems of late modernity have played a crucial role in this process of pervasive marginalization, which in turn yields the possibility of a totalized dominance of the everyday. Pointing out that, even in the 1980s, de Certeau was taking note of the changing model of the strategic, Van Den Eede emphasizes that, “[i]t used to be based on a ‘proper’ that was separated from everything else, but now that proper becomes the whole....As a result of this, ‘[t]actics...are no longer embedded in communities and consumers are becoming ‘immigrants,’ for there is no longer an ‘elsewhere’ (Van den Eede 2012, 33).

In some places, of course, we do see suggestions in de Certeau’s writing that meaningful pockets of local stabilities continue to exist. Perhaps the best example of this is in Mayol’s description of the role of Robert the Grocer as a neighborhood fixture (de Certeau et al. 1998, 71-83). Yet, Highmore has usefully observed that there is a different quality to instances like those of Robert as they are discussed in de Certeau’s work. Rather than being examples of the continued flourishing of a meaningful and productive everyday social and cultural life within modernity, they instead seem to be construed as vestiges.

Within the terms of de Certeau’s theorizing about everyday life, the example of Robert’s store evidences a number of features. Significantly, it shows a tenacious ability to continue certain practices in the face of disruption. This can be understood both as a stubbornness in regard to modernization, as well as a ‘tricky’ adaptation of a modern form to ancient ends: the newly designed shop is made to fit the persistent practices of easy conviviality...For de Certeau this is not a generalized practice; its singularity must be insisted upon –this shop, these practices, here and now. (Highmore 2006, 110-111)

Certainly, as Highmore later points out, de Certeau was sensitive to the plurality of experiences, practices, and meanings within everyday life in modernity (114), yet this should be qualified by noting that the singularity of practices appears to carry with it an ambivalence about the permanence of these local stabilities. While pockets of local stability may endure by tactically retooling or operating covertly from within modernity, the lion’s share of tactical operation appears to be done on the level of the individual as a continually shifting response to changing conditions. After all, tactical action is a “therapeutics” for deteriorating social relations, not an antidote.

Even so, by re-reading de Certeau’s general theory in light of the changed technical systems of the early twenty-first century, we will see that even these individualized ways of operating have begun to merge in significant ways with the vestigial points of socialization originally laid out by de Certeau and his colleagues. In this merger, this coming together of individual tactical resistance and points of local stability, we may find a new pathway for the study of individual expression and social tradition that has been characteristic of contemporary folkloristics. To demonstrate this possibility, we should consider some ethnographic examples within which we can more concretely trace the contours of this merger.

Aggregation and Multiple Vernacularity: Reading De Certeau for the Future

As Eric Gordon and Adriana de Souza e Silva have noted, as more and more elements of individual and social life have become “located or locatable” through the integration of digital technologies, especially mobile technologies, “geography becomes the organizational logic of the web.” This “networked locality” is reflected not only in the increasing prevalence of locative or location aware technologies, but also in the ability to engage with highly localized, place-specific information across geographic distances (Gordon and de Souza e Silva 2011, 2-3). The two examples that follow, a Twitter post pulled onto a hyperlocal news site in Boston and a series of posts on a neighborhood Facebook group, represent different possible configurations of net locality. This range of configurations offers a suggestive set of contexts in which we can usefully expand upon de Certeau’s notion of walking in the city in the context of the geospatialized experience of the everyday.

Example One: On her way home to her apartment in South Boston, MA, one night in May of 2013, Alison Rush spotted a large opossum scurrying across her front stoop. Like many city dwellers, Alison was excited to see such a large wild animal in a densely urban neighborhood like Southie. She quickly snapped a picture of the creature with her phone and posted the picture to her Twitter feed, where it could be viewed by the friends and acquaintances who follow her there. Within ten minutes, her Twitter followers (as of early 2016, Rush had less than seventy followers) were commenting on the picture, sharing their experiences with opossum, joking with Rush, and offering her advice for what to do with the creature.

In addition, she and several of her followers tagged the post to Adam Gaffin, a hyperlocal journalist in Boston whose site, Universal Hub, serves as a kind of clearing house for local news and discussion. The site offers readers a customizable stream of local news, drawn both from mainstream news sources and from various social media, including personal blog and Twitter accounts. These streams can be filtered by topic, but also by neighborhood or location. Within an hour, the picture of the possum and a link to her Twitter post had been placed on the Universal Hub feed with the headline “Fat and Sassy on the Steps of Southie.” By the next morning, the users who frequent the site were discussing other places they had seen opossums in the neighborhood, untangling the tricky linguistic history of the term “opossum” vs. “possum,” and sharing various verbal and visual opossum-related jokes.

Elsewhere, I have suggested that the geospatialized sociocultural interactions enabled by digital technology, of which these two sets of interactions are a clear example, force scholars of culture to reexamine our conventional understanding of the spatio-temporality of culture (Buccitelli 2013). We can no longer afford to think of “digital culture” as something set apart from everyday cultural production and reception in other realms; neither can we continue to overlook the important ways that the interactions enabled by these technologies have retooled the conventionally understood boundaries of space and time in everyday life. Instead, we find that the

diverse and layered use of these technologies in everyday life has opened up the possibility for intensely localized and geospatially-marked interactions that extend across space and time.

In this example we find that, the initial poster has recorded in digital spaces her reaction to what in physical spaces was a minor and ephemeral experience, but one tied deeply to its physical location. In doing so, she makes the cultural dimensions of the event open to an almost endless series of vernacular multiplications. For instance, by sharing the pictures on Twitter, Rush opens up the experience to reception and discussion by personal acquaintances on their personalized Twitter feeds. Here it becomes perhaps part of the basis for the ongoing social relationships developed among her relatively small group of followers. In a second process, by tagging Gaffin, Rush moves to convert her experience into informational points on the larger conceptual map in the culture of the local community and, as such, to a point which can give rise to a moment of shared cultural production outside of their personal circle of acquaintances.

Another dimension of these examples, however, illustrates what I have elsewhere suggested is the tendency of digital platforms to enable the temporal extension and durability of what in offline spaces might otherwise be much more temporally condensed and ephemeral discursive events (Buccitelli 2012). While discussions in face-to-face settings are unlikely to occur continuously over the course of thirty-six hours, digital contexts routinely involve discursive exchanges that stretch over longer periods. Also, the extended performance events, unlike many face-to-face performances, leave a durable record that can be accessed at later points, and in doing so form the potential seeds for future performances as well.

Example Two: Just after 9AM on February 11, 2016, a young woman living in East Boston announced on an East Boston Facebook group that she had just gotten a job at the nearby Edward Lawrence Logan Airport, a longstanding but controversial fixture in neighborhood folk geography (Buccitelli 2016, 16). Noting that she needed to be at work at 3:30 AM, she asked for help finding the best walking route from her home on Paris Street to the airport entrance. Congratulating her, other people in the group also offered her detailed advice, often based on their own experiences as workers at the airport, of the shortest walking routes, which parks were closed at what times, which public bus lines would be running, as well as private hotels that offer shuttle services that she could take advantage of.

By the afternoon, local women were also interjecting into the discussion concerns for her safety, being out on the streets at such an early hour of the night. An initial burst of conversation on this topic mainly between four women [P1-4] and later by a man [P5], which lasted for just over an hour, was then followed by many more comments in the ensuing hours.

P1: At 3:30 am? Take a cab!!

Like · Reply · 1 · February 11 at 7:18pm

P2: I would not be walking in the community at that hour. Women have been attacked in the wee hours.

Like · Reply · 7 · February 11 at 7:35pm

P1: I'm with you [P2]

Like · Reply · February 11 at 7:41pm

P3: LISTEN TO [P2]!!!

Like · Reply · 3 · February 11 at 8:10pm

P4: I would take a cab myself but she asked for walking directions

Like · Reply · February 11 at 8:18pm

P1: It's too dangerous to walk there isn't a job in the world that's worth losing my life for or getting hurt for!!

Like · Reply · February 11 at 8:21pm

P4: See if there is someone at your job who can give you a ride. I'm sure you aren't the only one who has to report in at that time

Like · Reply · February 11 at 8:22pm

P5: I walked my wife to the bus stop, then walked back to bed lol

Like · Reply · 4 · February 11 at 8:23pm

P5: Now i drive her in as often as i can

Like · Reply · 1 · February 11 at 8:23pm

The posts following this conversation continued through the night, presenting further information and narratives about experiences walking in the neighborhood, different possible routes, and issues of personal safety. The final post the following morning, made by a local man, offered both a similar set of commentary on his daily walking practices, his previous experiences walking in the neighborhood, and commentary on crime in the area.

P6: When I walk from the shaws area, i walk east along grove street to the East Boston Greenway, then north to the East Boston Memorial Park and right across to the Airport Shuttle that runs all night. That walk is usually well lit, and not gates to close. I have never seen anyone threatening or anything like that when I do that walk at odd times. I think there is a way into the the Memorial Park from Porter street if Grove street is too far south.

Like · Reply · February 12 at 7:34am

Along with these comments, the poster also uploaded a digital image of a map showing the walking route he described. This last move underlines the reversal of the situational dynamics between examples one and two. In the first example, the Twitter poster, Alison Rush made use of digital technologies to both record her experience of personal movement as it happened, and to convert that experience into multiple social situations in which discourse or narrative could take shape. By contrast, in this example, the original poster used a digital social space to engage in a conversation with other local people about their tactics of movement through the neighborhood, in the hopes of informing her own tactical practices. Here, rather than tactical movement giving rise to multiple discursive spaces, the latter will (potentially) give rise to the former.

Although the emerging dynamics I have outlined are taking shape through the cultural instrumentalization of newly popularized technologies, there is an obvious overlap with de Certeau's discussion of the tactics of walking in the city. Through their tactics of spatial movement in urban neighborhoods, de Certeau famously posited, individuals form spatial narratives by movement through, or consumption of the text of, urban geography. These narratives form a locus of individualized everyday resistance to the powerful institutional forces that have generally shaped urban geographies (de Certeau 1988a, 91-110).

While de Certeau envisioned individual tactics of walking in the city as a kind of remediation for the loss of these vernacular social sites of cultural production, the conditions we find emerging through the overlay of digital spaces on to physical spaces suggest not just a reemergence of a single set of vernacular sites, but a situation of multiplied vernacularities. Note, for instance, that in situations like the ones described above, subjects articulate their own forms of resistance through their personal tactics of walking, while also simultaneously engaging in several social processes of discourse and narration that reinvest urban spaces with social meaning. First, by creating an annotative layer of digital information that is editable and accessible through mobile devices such as smartphones and PDAs, a subject's individual tactical movements through the urban landscape come to shape the course of everyday physical movements for others who access and respond to these annotations through their own physical movements. People make choices about where and how to walk based not only on information but also narrative and discourse about local spaces that they receive digitally. These choices then can be continually annotated on digital representations of physical space or in geospatially-keyed accessible forms in digital spaces. Hence, the activity of walking, which, in the context of de Certeau's original treatment appeared to have limited, if any, potential as a social form, now takes on a dimension of sociality through its ability to *aggregate* vernacular annotations by multiple subjects based on each person's consumption and re-articulation of *both* institutionally structured spaces and the everyday movements of previous subjects through these spaces, as Casey Schmitt has similarly observed in his elegant study of the "tactical trail" in this volume.¹²

At the same time, by creating streams of locative discourse on their mobile devices through social technologies such as Twitter, Facebook, and Foursquare, many users now track their own physical movements through urban space while simultaneously discussing these movements with other people. Accordingly, we might also use examples such as these to usefully expand our consideration of performance to accommodate cases in which we see everyday individualized tactical practices, de Certeau's classic instances of "poaching" or "walking in the city," as now coming together, sometimes simultaneously, with social performance events, which are both, in turn, made part of the aggregation of localized social knowledge that forms a key component of the "shapeable, contestable norm within which social agency can be enacted" (Bronner 2012, 40). This hybrid tactic of "walking in the city" is thus constitutive of a nearly endlessly multipliable set of vernacularities¹³, layered everyday operations that can bring together

[K]nowledge of surroundings, daily trips, relationships with neighbors (politics), relationships with shopkeepers (economics), diffuse feelings of being on one's territory (ethology), so many indices whose accumulation and combination produce and then organize the social and cultural apparatus according to which urban space becomes not only the object of knowledge, but a *place of recognition*. (de Certeau et al. 1998, 13)

While Robert's shop in Croix-Rousse appeared to be a singular instance of "stubborn" and covert conviviality in the face of a modernity that is overwhelmingly destructive of local social relations, the new possibilities for social encounter that are opened in the digital spaces surrounding these digital annotations at least indicate the *potential* for a renewed or reinvigorated set of "local stabilities."

In other words, these vernacularities, because of their ability to aggregate and layer everyday individual tactical action *and* give rise to social discourses and performances, might offer a route to *reconstitute* rather than "substitute for" "local legends...[which] permit exits, ways of going out and coming back in, and thus habitable spaces" (de Certeau 1988a, 107).¹⁴ The possibility of multiplying and aggregating everyday tactical practices through the increasingly pervasive and deep integration of digital technologies into our daily experiences surely has broad ramifications that must be studied carefully.

Conclusion: Multiplied Vernaculars, Performance, and the Event

Of performance, a key epistemological category in American folkloristics, Bronner, following Elizabeth Fine, has observed that:

[W]hile variations exist in the use of performance, for most American folklorists applying the concept, the important principles are that: folklore is identified as aesthetically marked events (rather than textual items) situated in an observable, specific frame or stage conducive to artistic communication (usually small groups and settings set apart from ordinary life); performers take responsibility for presentation

of this artistic material to an audience; performers strategically shape expressions in response to the immediate context and personal motivations, public purposes, and collateral effects; and perceptions of the meaning of the performance may vary with different segments of the audience and performers, and in different times and settings, and those perceptions are valid and discoverable in ethnographic observation. (Bronner 2012, 30)

Although a useful corrective to the often overly textual methodologies that held sway at earlier moments in American folkloristics, performance approaches have frequently been criticized for their overemphasis on the particularity of performance events (for example, Jones 1979; Bronner 1988, 97; Dundes 2005). While the unique features of any given performance are, of course, deeply relevant to understanding how meaning emerges in this context, the interconnections between these events and previous performances, or everyday practices have not been as extensively considered. Bronner has suggested that

The criticism of performance of neglecting the past and empirical evidence may be obviated with considerations of historic predispositions and precedents while preserving the ethnographic observation of symbolic communication in the socially constructed frames of practice. (Bronner 2012, 40)

To this, however, I would like to add another dimension. While a consideration of the “historic predispositions and precedents” through a practice-oriented view of performance helps to place a single performance within the appropriate social framework of everyday practice, we should also consider the ways in which digital technologies are increasingly commonly aggregating, multiplying, and layering both practices and performances both at a single temporal point (the initial temporally extended discursive event) and across time (the durable trace).¹⁵ So a key question for further consideration, which will require further attention than can be given here, is how we might appropriately rework of our understanding of the event, and its attendant relation to everyday practices in heavily mediated environments.

Through a re-reading of de Certeau’s larger scholarship on folklore and folklore studies, we can more deeply appreciate his understanding of the conditions of modernity. Folklore is not simply something to which de Certeau’s work could be usefully applied, but in fact, a key feature of his larger intellectual program. By understanding folk cultures as alternative loci of cultural power that have been marginalized by the same disciplining of knowledge that has contributed to secularization, de Certeau articulated a historical vision of the processes, in which folklorists themselves were complicit, which have de-contextualized these loci of cultural power from their social centers. These have, in turn, produced conditions under which the bulk of everyday social and cultural experience exists in marginality, punctuated by vestiges of “conviviality” which recall the possibilities of public socialization that have nearly vanished from the contemporary experience. It is against this backdrop that we find the individual centrally positioned in de Certeau’s work, as the key actor in everyday

life: an isolated and marginalized figure whose tactics offer brief possibilities for re-engagement within a larger framework of social disintegration.

Finally, understanding de Certeau in this way calls our attention to the ways in which the processes of tactical action highlighted in his works form the basis for an exploration of the ways in which individualized tactical action and renewed social discourses and performance are merging together in the newly available everyday cultural situations enabled by digital technologies. Defined by new expressive conditions which include the temporal extension of performative events and the durability and accessibility of much of the previously ephemeral expressiveness of the everyday, a close examination of these situations will help to expand the folkloristic and ethnological understanding of the ways in which the performance event in an expanded temporal framework under current conditions is now potentially keyed both to individualized spatial practices and to durable and accessible previous performances (often concerned with a discussion of tactical practice). Under these conditions a single situation can become simultaneously event *and* text, individual *and* social, ephemeral *and* lasting. Therefore, following the question of how to reconceive our understanding of the event, a second question emerges: to what extent do these shifting dynamics offer the possibility for a genuine reconstitution of the largely disappeared local stabilities of folk culture? While not assured, it is at least possible that folklorists and ethnologists could play a role in this process of reconstitution similar to the role that de Certeau saw them playing in its destruction. In demonstrating and carefully articulating the productive merger of individual and social in the emergent tactics of the everyday, folklorists might indeed “allow a multitude of voices to be much more than a chorus of roaring silence: to make culture hospitable to the voices that inhabit it” (Highmore 2006, 93). “These arts and practices have always kept existing, though often in an unconscious way, to unexpectedly resurge of late,” Van Den Eede observes, “our task is to stimulate this resurgence” (2012, 37).

Notes

I would like to offer my thanks to Casey Schmitt for his advice, expertise, and great patience in helping me prepare this essay.

- 1 The relationship between folklore and “popular culture” has, of course, been the subject of much discourse in folkloristics. Although I have observed elsewhere that his writings on the subject have not always been adequately understood (Buccitelli 2014), Richard Dorson’s influential mid-century writings (Dorson 1950; 1976) did much to centralize this question in American folkloristics. More recently, however, a steady stream of scholarship has questioned more conventional understandings of this relationship, especially in the context of mass media (See for example, Bluestein 1994; Dégh 1994; Koven 2003; 2007; 2008; De Caro and Jordan 2004; Frank 2011; Foster and Tolbert 2016). While this debate is a crucial one, it is somewhat tangential to the discussion here. Throughout his work, de

Certeau discusses the notion of “popular culture” mainly in the sense that this term was used by the historians of everyday life in the Medieval and Early Modern periods who were de Certeau’s intellectual contemporaries, given his training in France in the 1950s in the history of Early Modern mysticism. Thus, although he does offer some critiques of Marxist schools of popular cultural studies, de Certeau’s usage of the term seems to primarily be concerned with the forms of culture that would fall within the conventional purview of folkloristics.

- 2 *The Practice of Everyday Life* was published in French in 1980 as *L’Invention du Quotidien*. The English translation was first published in 1984. I will cite to the 1984 English translation in this essay. “On the Oppositional Practices of Everyday Life,” written by de Certeau and translated by Frederic Jameson and Carl Lovitt, was published in the journal *Social Text* in 1980. It is described in an editorial note as “an excerpt from Michel de Certeau’s forthcoming book, *Pratiques quotidiennes. Pour une sémiotique de la culture ordinaire*” (3, unnumbered footnote). For a discussion of the history and significance of this title change, see Buchanan 2000, 8-10. See also Timothy J. Tomasik’s brief discussion of the origin of the English title in his translator’s note to volume 2. For examples of works by American folklorists which employ concepts from de Certeau drawn from either the 1980 essay or the 1980/1984 book, see Motz 1998, 342-349; Tangherlini 1999a, 152; 1999b, 99-103; 2000, 47-62; 2003, 137; Koven 2007, 186; Berger and Del Negro 2005, 6-7, 20; Evans 2005, 124-127; Kenny 2007, 318; Landwehr 2007, 133, 141; Berger 2009, 126; Hertzfeld 2009, 135; Miller 2011, 999; Herbergs 2011, 871. Non-US: Narváez 2003, 131; Welz 1999; Paloque-Berges 2010, 124.
- 3 Even more specifically, Nigel Thrift has observed that “Walking in the City,” the seventh chapter of *The Practice of Everyday Life*, has been “anthologized or extracted almost to distraction” (Thrift 2004, 41).
- 4 See, for example, Noyes (2012, 16) for a brief discussion of de Certeau’s thinking about the history of folklore.
- 5 Berger and Del Negro appear to have transposed the date of the beginning of de Certeau’s research efforts on the project (1974) with the publication date of the two volumes of *The Practice of Everyday Life* in French (1980), but their basic commentary and page references to the English translations are accurate.
- 6 While not common in folkloristic work, a growing body of scholarship, most notable Ben Highmore’s *Michel de Certeau: Analysing Culture* (2006), has been attempting to complicate the received understanding of de Certeau in the English-speaking academy since Buchanan made these comments.
- 7 Here we see a dramatic difference between de Certeau’s views about the historical relations between folklore and modernity and those of Marxist critic Luigi Lombardi-Satriani. In his 1983 critical survey of Marxist writing on folklore, Jose Limon characterizes Lombardi-Satriani’s view as being that, “[f]olklore actively contests the hegemony of dominant social orders and it does so in two modes. First, folklore has the capacity for direct contestation; that is, it can directly symbolize and “name” the class enemy in the manner of political jokes and protest songs. However, and of greater interest, we are also told that folklore can also offer indirect contestation “by its presence.” That is, subordinate classes produce a number of autonomous behaviors (largely in the generic realms of ritual and material culture) whose very existence limits the total hegemony of parallel products and behaviors

- emanating from the dominant social order" (Limon 1983, 45-6).
- 8 Stephen Harnett made a similar observation about the productive aspects of de Certeau's work in his 1998 essay "Michel de Certeau's Critical Historiography and the Rhetoric of Maps." Harnett writes: "[D]e Certeau's critical historiography moves us beyond the postmodern injunction against Truth and Transcendence, and, thus, toward a productive combination of the strengths of both rhetorical and philosophical investigation. Indeed, I argue that what makes de Certeau so important, in terms of advancing contemporary debates regarding the relationship between philosophy and rhetoric, is that by engaging in a philosophically informed discussion of historiography, he is able to explicate more fully the importance of rhetoric while grounding this examination in pragmatic, historical studies that advance the breadth of our perspectives on philosophy, rhetoric, and actual historical moments" (285). See also Poster 1992, for further discussion of de Certeau's relationship to poststructuralist thought and the potential his work offers for moving his study of culture beyond the mainline poststructuralist framework.
 - 9 This is one of the reasons that it was unfortunate that a publisher's decision led to the first volume being published independently of the second, and years before. This breaking up of the original work has likely contributed to the tendency to read volume 1 as a self-contained work that functions totally independently of the second volume.
 - 10 Buchanan uses the term "non-individual" here, as I read it, to mean more or less a non-specific individual subject. Van Den Eede (2012, 31), following others, has called this de Certeau's "everyman" or "man without qualities."
 - 11 This is terrain he shares both with other practice theorists, such as Giddens, and with Marxist thinkers as well. For instance, Jose Limon has pointed out of William Fox's scholarship on folklore and technology that "Fox, like Jameson, suggests that the reorganization of society in advanced capitalism has led to the erosion of those social groupings that sustained folklore" (1983, 47).
 - 12 The distinction between the vernacular and the institutional has long been a key feature of many folkloristic studies, including those employing practice, performance, or rhetorical studies frames. For example, Bauman 2008, 33, even argues for the idea that this is a defining feature of folklore studies. But here we see something of the dynamic outlined by Howard (2008a; 2008b; 2010); Manovitch (2009, 324) and (Van Den Eede 2012, 39-40), in which in mediated environments the bright line between vernacular and institutional begins to soften, creating the possibility of what Van Den Eede calls "strategic tactics."
 - 13 Along slightly different lines, Trevor Blank has argued that the pervasive integration of digital technologies in everyday life has resulted in a hybridization of vernacular expression, "the process by which 'real world' discursive practices significantly influence, and are reciprocally influenced by, virtualized discursive practices". Importantly, Blank further observes that these discursive practices "shape the dynamics of interaction across corporeal and virtual context" (Blank 2013, 107). For discussions of concept of hybridity in folk cultur, see also Kapchan 1993; Garcia Canlini et al. 1993; Garcia Canlini 1995; Kapchan and Strong 1999; and Stross 1999.
 - 14 Cultural scholars have, of course, long argued that mass media texts have offered similar opportunities for both creative production, as well as social discourse, though they have often skipped over the moment of individual tactical consumption, in favor of a focus on

the social. See for example, Silverstone (1989) and Jenkins (1992) for discussions of these dynamics in the context of television. Conquergood (2002, 145) offers a brief reflection on the potential for this kind of reconstitution.

- 15 In a certain sense, I am advocating working along both synchronic and diachronic lines of inquiry classically defined by Saussure (1983 [1916]) in the context of linguistics.

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Repetition, Improvisation, Tradition: Deleuzean Themes in the Folk Art of Bengal

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Abstract

In this paper, I use Gilles Deleuze's concept of repetition to understand how craft technique becomes an embodied practice as a form of habit which allows for innovation. Deleuze enables us to think of practice as unselfconscious and habitual as it is based on past synthesizations; but, precisely because no two acts can ever be the same, repetition also engages with the idea of difference. His idea of repetition and difference allows us to think of creativity as emerging from everyday craft practices. I elaborate on this idea through a detailed examination of a set of pictorial narratives about the 9/11 crash on the World Trade Centre in New York, executed by folk artists of Bengal who appropriate modernist techniques of "facification" and fragmentation into their traditional compositions. For Deleuze the face is the site where ideas of habit, social role, and individuated self consciousness are problematised. When seen as a fragment that can be detached from the body, the face can travel to other sites, which may then acquire properties of expressivity and individuation. Such techniques have been used very effectively in narrative forms, such as the comic book. I contrast the narrative compositions of the Bengali folk artists with the comics' form of storytelling (a subject of experimentation that I encountered in the course of my fieldwork) and end with some thoughts on the process of oral composition.

Artisanal Practice, Embodied Knowledge, and Artistic Innovation

Artisanal learning is conventionally thought to be a product of habitual practice.¹ Apprentices learn by rote, patiently copying the gestures of the master craftsman until they have internalized the techniques of their craft (Farr 2008). This kind of bodily knowledge that comes from a mode of doing is considered necessary for the deep knowledge of the way the material actually behaves in the hands of the crafts person, enabling her² to evolve a set of templates or schemas that can be adapted to respond to different cues from the environment, often creating works of great aesthetic value in spite of limited conceptual knowledge (Siva Kumar 2006). The aesthetics of such practices generally foreground skill and technique rather than novel conceptualization, and creativity is viewed as a kind of improvisation rather than self-conscious expression. How then does novelty emerge in artisanal practice? And is there any space for individual self expression? Is there such a thing as communal creativity or is that quality always associated with individuals? In a famous essay on the Russian fairy tale, the structuralist Roman Jakobson (1966) said that artistic innovations that are of significance are always brought about by individuals. However, in folk cultures with predominantly oral traditions, such innovations fade away unless they are absorbed into the expressive repertoires of the larger community. For this to happen

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the imprint of the author must be forgotten, i.e., for the work to become popular it must be anonymous, treated as common property by the community at large.

In this essay, I attempt to chart a middle ground between the two positions delineated above—neither rendering folk artists as mute vessels incapable of self-reflexivity or conceptual thought, nor treating them as coterminous with art practitioners in the modern art world whose practices are supposed to be self-consciously agonistic, based on a valorization of subversion so that the artist deliberately sets herself in opposition to dominant societal values. Instead I try to offer a notion of artistic agency that is multiple and synthetic rather than autonomous and subjective, conceptualized through an elaboration of the work process which allow us to think of artists as embodied through their practices rather than their finished artworks.

My argument is framed by Deleuze's ideas about repetition and time. For Deleuze, the embodied individual is constituted as a passive subject—a site on which thoughts circulate, encountering sensations and objects that may be energized to form ideas (Deleuze 2004). However, the body that is the medium in which the materialization of such creative energies takes place first has to be honed into becoming a receptive vehicle. It must become a machine or automaton constituted through repeated work and exercise which allows thought to flow through the individual subject. Thought, for Deleuze, is no longer the result of self-conscious reflection by individuals, but an emergent process that arises from the passive synthesis of time reflected in repetitive and habitual practices. It is only when past activities are brought into the present through habit and memory that 'things' acquire actual shape. I try to show how artisanal forms of learning through repetition enable creative novelty to emerge not in the mode of purposeful self-expression, but by cultivating habits in the form of embodied practices that are responsive to continual variation in the environment. Artistic agency manifests itself in contingent acts—unexpected connections that reveal their potential only retrospectively after the art work is actualized (Wang 2008).

Emergent Events and Painted Narratives

In this section, I illustrate the conceptual framework delineated above with examples of artistic production from the Chitrakar, a community of picture storytellers from West Bengal, gathered in the course of anthropological fieldwork in a village called Naya in West Medinipur district. But first, a brief description of the community itself.

Even though the term 'chitrakar' means picture-maker, the art refers to a form of narrative performance in which the bard narrates a story in song while s/he displays a painted scroll. The subjects of their narratives are largely mythological, but because this is a popular and secular form of rural entertainment, there are many compositions that deal with dramatic secular events, such as natural calamities and scandals. The distinction between secular and mythological is a recent one, however, and originated with the post-independence patronage of the folk arts by state agencies to popularize policies and schemes concerning education and health. The enthusiasm with which folk artists such as the chitrakars have taken up such novel themes has not only led to a vastly expanded range of narrative subjects, but also to a new classification of themes into traditional (*puranic*) and social (*samajik*).

In spite of this division, the overall framing of narratives is still influenced by a kind of mythological organization that views time as cyclical and synchronic. Chitrakars are largely Muslim, but compose and perform narratives based on both Hindu as well as Muslim myths. This does not seem so extraordinary if we remember that at the level of folk religiosity, multi-religious villages like Naya develop syncretic cultures that revolve around faith-based worship at popular shrines of saints, as well as public rituals in which both Hindus and Muslims participate. According to scholars like Richard Eaton (2000), Rafiuddin Ahmed (1981), and Motiyur Rohman (2003), Islam in rural Bengal was spread by holy men or spiritual guides called *pirs*, who used institutions and forms of expression that were local and popular to convey their ideas about Islam. This led to the development of a body of literature that was distinctively Bengali in spirit and appealed to Hindus and Muslims alike (Stewart 2002).³ One could say that the chitrakars are the contemporary exemplars of this syncretistic literary tradition.⁴

Until about three decades ago, the chitrakars were a caste of itinerant picture storytellers. They acquired a certain visibility among the urban elite when the nationalist scholar Gurusaday Dutt (1882-1941) sought inspiration from their work and life styles to articulate a model of Indian culture that was secular and based on Hindu-Muslim syncretism. Dutt is an important figure in the nationalist revival of craft traditions in independent India. He was inspired by the arts and crafts movement in Britain while still an official in the British colonial service in Bengal, and set up several craft fairs and institutions while in service. He was inspired by Bengali folk culture—especially that of the chitrakars—and felt that they could contribute significantly to the development of a national culture by providing indigenous models of secularism (Chatterji 2012). According to Dutt, the chitrakars were an exemplary voice in the folk culture of Bengal—they occupied an interstitial position in the caste hierarchy, designating themselves as Muslim, following local (Hindu) customs and displaying scrolls with largely Hindu themes (Bhattacharjee 1980, Dutt 1939, 1990).

The chitrakars are scattered all over Bengal, but very few still practice their traditional occupation. It is only in Medinipur district that the artists have been able to withstand the competition of more popular forms of entertainment, such as films and television, by adapting their art form to the tastes of contemporary urban publics. In the traditional world of chitrakar performance the painted scroll was used as a prop—as an aid to bardic narration serving the same function as pictures in illustrated storybooks for children. Over time the space for bardic performance has shrunk and artists have shifted their attention to the painted scroll, creating increasingly elaborate scrolls that depict stories not only from their traditional repertoire but also event-based stories about newsworthy subjects like the 9/11 strike on the World Trade Centre in New York and the Tsunami (Chatterji 2012, 2015). Such scrolls are composed with an eye to a new regime of patronage—the urban public that frequents state-sponsored craft fairs and, more recently, museums and private galleries.

Interestingly, while the space for the traditional multi-media performance that combined singing with picture display has shrunk because new patrons in Delhi

and abroad cannot understand the songs couched in a form of Bengali that is specific to Medinipur, the artists still compose the songs, especially for new thematic compositions, before painting the scroll. I was told that the song serves to anchor the pictorial story as it guides the painter on how to render the pictorial scenes. I found this to be true, as the only new themes undertaken during my fieldwork that did not have accompanying songs were those that already had ready-made stories taken primarily from films such as *Titanic* and *Godzilla*, of which pirated DVD copies were available for viewing in the village itself.⁵ In the traditional performance mode, the lead singer unrolls the scroll frame by frame while s/he sings the song using the index finger to point to figures in the frame whose names appear in the particular stanza being sung. Old mythological compositions had distinctive tunes for different stanzas of the song and usually included a refrain sung by a chorus of two or three supporting singers. This is not done for new compositions. Artists tend to use a common tune based on a synthesis of popular tunes that is somewhat derogatively called 'radio folk' by my respondents. Not only is this easy to sing but is pleasing to the ear, as I have been told, because it does not require prior knowledge of the traditional form of music and is recognizable to urban audiences.

I will now try to illustrate my argument about repetition and creativity with an analysis of a narrative theme from a set of painted scrolls. The narrative is based on a contemporary event—the 9/11 strike on the World Trade Centre in New York. The 9/11 story was composed within a couple of months of the event itself, inspired by a *jatra* (folk theatre) performance on the subject by a travelling theatre troupe from Kolkata (formerly Calcutta) that played in Naya village, West Medinipur, where the 9/11 or *Laden* scroll, as it is popularly designated, was first composed.⁶

The play dealt with the events leading up to the Gulf War and the crash and collapse of the Twin Towers formed the climax of the performance, coming at the end of the play. It was depicted as a cyclorama⁷ on a separate stage (Mukhopadhyay 2008). The leader of *Digbijoy Opera*, the troupe that performed this *jatra* in Naya, said in an interview to Bhaskar Mukhopadhyay, that the play wove in several themes including a sub-plot about a middle-class Bengali boy who goes to the U.S. to study, succumbs to the corrupting influence of a decadent Western life style, and dies in the 9/11 crash. The 19th century themes of modern decadence and the corrupting influence of Westernization are still popular in Bengali films and television serials and were probably added for audience appeal.

However, the *chitrakar* rendering of the event is radically different. I have examined ten versions of the *Laden* scroll and, apart from variation in detail such as the manner in which the Twin Towers and the crash are depicted, they reveal a common episodic structure that articulates the Bush-bin Laden relationship, showing how it transformed from intimate friendship to violent enmity. The pictorial narrative begins with the crash; it then depicts scenes of long distance communication between Bush and bin Laden and meetings that lead up to the war in Afghanistan; then the war, and finally bin Laden's escape to the caves in the Tora Bora mountains (figures 1 to 6). I have heard three versions of the song that accompanies the painted story on the scroll. The



Figure 1: First frame of *Laden* scroll by Tagar Chitrakar. Pigment on paper

songs do not replicate all the scenes portrayed in the scroll. Instead they serve as a general commentary on the event and how it led to a massive hunt for bin Laden and subsequently to war in Afghanistan. The suffering of the victims is usually emphasized in the song, the storyteller's finger pointing to specific figures being sung about as s/he slowly unrolls the scroll, frame by frame. The scrolls are divided into six frames or more, each frame depicting a different scene in the story. As I have said, all the *Laden* scrolls begin with the

scene of the crash. The airplane is foregrounded in the first frame—a swollen fish-shaped form with a bearded face that represents Osama bin Laden.

The first scroll on the 9/11 Strike follows the order of events as they appeared on television. Thus, as Manu Chitrakar, the composer of the first *Laden* scroll told me, "We did not know what was happening, who was behind it. Only later when scenes of celebration were being broadcast from bin Laden's camp did the world come to suspect that it might be him." The first frame of Manu's scroll has an ordinary airplane crashing into the twin towers, followed by scenes of destruction, and then revelry in bin Laden's camp (figure 7). It was Swarna Chitrakar, Manu's sister, who first put bin Laden's face on the killer plane (figure 8). But this motif struck a chord and has been absorbed into the painterly vocabulary. She made other innovations, such as anthropomorphic images



Figure 2: Second frame of *Laden* scroll by Tagar Chitrakar. Pigment on paper.



Figure 3: Third frame of *Laden* scroll by Tagar Chitrakar. Pigment on paper.

of the weeping fire engine that did not catch on and are not part of the stable pictorial narrative. Manu's scroll also followed the plot of the *jatra* that I mentioned earlier, though with some modification. A young Bengali boy died in the crash, on the eve of his return to India. Scenes of pathos, which showed the parents receiving the news of their son's death by telephone, were included. This theme has not been retained over time, though the telephone motif still occurs but is transformed to signify the Bush-bin Laden relationship

as we see in Tagar's scroll (see figure 2). Manu tried to bring the event closer to his local audience by including an Indian protagonist. Since the primary audience for the picture scroll is non-local these elements were soon dropped even by Manu.

In scrolls with sacred themes the first scene is usually disjunct from the story. It depicts the god or the main protagonist enthroned with a retinue of worshippers and is accompanied by the invocation sung before the actual story is musically rendered. Since the *Laden* scroll deals with a historical theme, and that too with human tragedy, it cannot begin with an invocation. However, images of the airplane with bin Laden's face and the crash tell us about the subject of the story, as do the invocatory stanzas and the enthroned gods in the traditional Chitrakar performances.

Tagar Chitrakar's scroll emphasizes the Bush-bin Laden relationship. Only one of the towers is depicted on the right-hand side of the frame. Flames erupt from the top of the tower



Figure 4: Fourth frame of *Laden* scroll by Tagar Chitrakar. Pigment on paper.



Figure 5: Fifth frame of *Laden* scroll by Tagar Chitrakar. Pigment on paper.

the plane vis-à-vis the tower. The plane seems to be flying away from the tower and coming toward the left of the frame with the face pointing toward the viewer. Unlike the tower, the plane appears undamaged (see figure 1). However, the tower form is repeated in several other frames and serves as a motif symbolizing the Bush-bin Laden relationship in the narrative (see figure 2).

In the second frame of Tagar's scroll, the tower form becomes a column separating the figures of Bush and bin Laden, seen here talking to each other by telephone. The figures are symmetrically positioned, each one flanked by guards carrying guns. The point of distinction is the presence or absence of the beard, for Bush and his men look young and beardless and bin Laden and his men look old with full beards (see figures 2 and 3). Bin Laden, a replication of the face on the airplane, is now shown near the right-hand side of the frame. The position of the bearded figure keeps alternating from left to right and again



Figure 6: Sixth frame of *Laden* scroll by Tagar Chitrakar. Pigment on paper.



Figure 7: First frame of *Laden* scroll by Manu Chitrakar. Pigment on paper.



Figure 8: First frame of *Laden* scroll by Swarna Chitrakar. Pigment on paper.



Figure 9: Last frame of *Laden* scroll (2) by Probir Chitrakar. Pigment on paper.

Bengali myths. Gods and demons are portrayed as both rivals and kin. As I was told repeatedly while in Naya, Bush and bin Laden were like brothers, just like Habil and Kabil, which is why the enmity between them was so fierce. Habil and Kabil are the two brothers Cain and Able in the Semitic tradition.)

Continuing with the description of the scroll, the tower form becomes a canon spouting flames in Tagar's third register, depicting the battle scene—but it acts as a barrier separating the two armies, its mouth points upward rather than facing the soldiers (see figure 3). The battle scene in Tagar's scroll shows only corpses, some of which are bearded (see figure 4). There are no barriers that separate the soldiers of the two armies, though the bearded figures tend to be concentrated in the upper half of the frame. The last two frames of the *Laden* scroll show bin Laden and his followers on horseback, being chased by Bush's men, and finally disappearing into the caves in

to left in the successive frames. It is only in the last frame that it occupies a position at the centre of the frame (see figures 1 to 6). Perhaps these alternating positions of the bearded and beardless faces tell us something about the way the bin Laden-Bush relationship has been conceptualised in this pictorial imagination. Bush and bin Laden are portrayed as the archetypal rivals—and their followers depicted as replicas of one or the other leader. (This depiction harks back to a traditional way of depicting the theme of rivalry or conflict in



Figure 10: Last frame of *Laden* scroll by Rohim Chitrakar. Pigment on paper.



Figure 11: Last frame of *Laden* scroll (1) by Probir Chitrakar. Pigment on paper.

a repeat motif, one that takes on a variety of meanings as the context in which it occurs changes. It begins as an index signposting the narrative theme and then transmutes into a term in a binary set, with the juxtaposition of two faces in successive frames—one bearded and the other beardless, suggesting an agonistic intimacy between Bush and bin Laden as the two chief protagonists in this story.

Experiments with the story line did not stop here. Other artists started unravelling the multiple strands of meaning condensed in the bin Laden face. Thus the last frame of Probir's scroll replicates Tagar's story but with one crucial difference. It shows bin Laden on his white horse as an inset set distinctly apart from the mountains in the background. The mouth of the cave is reduced to a border that frames the bin Laden figure and separates it from the action scenes above (see figure 9 by Probir and 10 by Rohim for a dramatic variant on the same theme). Slightly earlier variants on this theme by Probir show that he had been thinking about the bin Laden figure for some time. As figure 11 shows, he was exploring single bin Laden figures framed by the mouth of a cave.

Other *Laden* scrolls present further elaborations of this scene. We see the mouth of the cave that could be made into a decorative border for framing the bin Laden image now transformed into a cross section of a saint's tomb underground as worshippers with folded hands stand before it. One particularly dramatic scroll shows a tree growing out of the tomb—spreading its branches backward to cut across previous frames of the scroll that depict scenes of the Gulf War, as if to say that it is only through the transformation of bin Laden's demonic image into one that can be pacified that global peace will be possible (figures 12 and 13 by Chandan). Interestingly none of these developments in the pictorial story find mention in the songs.⁸

the Tora Bora mountains (see figures 5 and 6).

The representational strategy that Swarna used—attaching a bearded face to the image of the killer airplane in the first frame of the *Laden* scroll—introduced the pictorial story with an arresting image that created ripples in the narrative universe of the chitrakars. It led to a great deal of experimentation, at least as far as the pictorial story is concerned, as artists started playing with the possibilities offered by the motif of the bearded face. In the scroll described above, the face is used as



Figure 12: Second Last Frame of *Laden Scroll* by Chandan Chitrakar.
Pigment on paper.

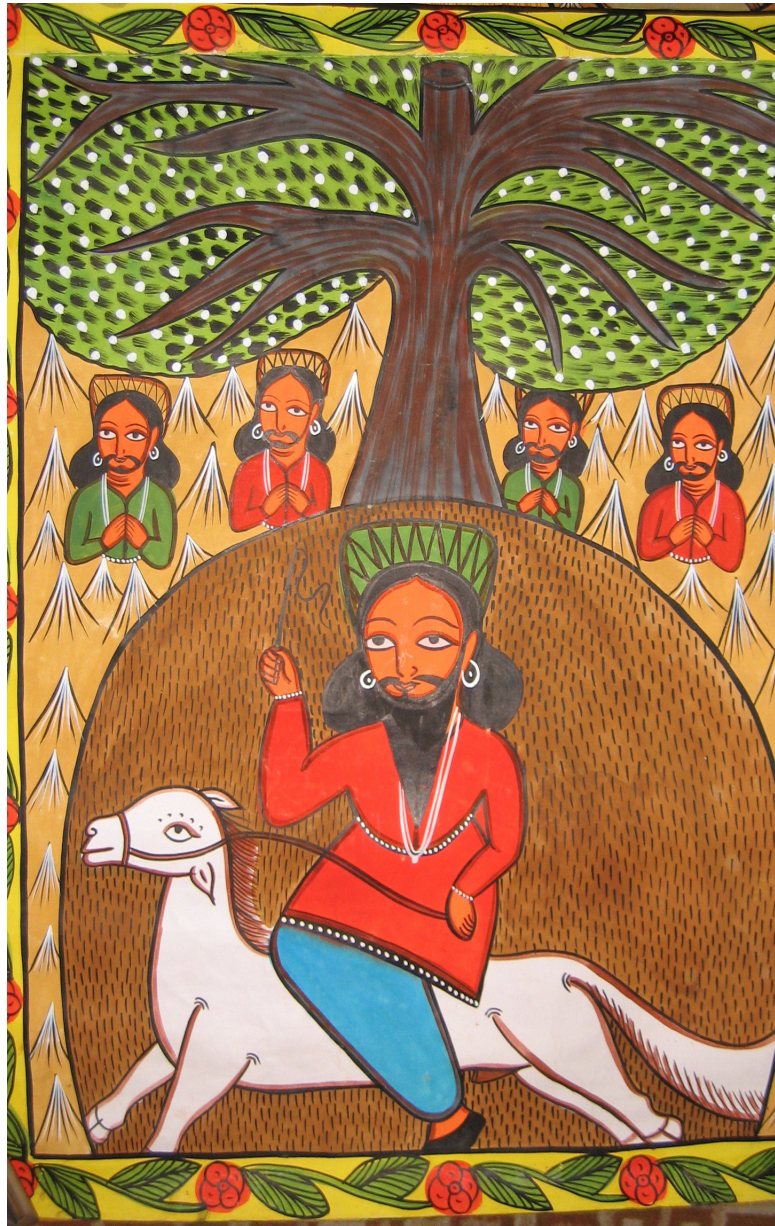


Figure 13: Last frame of *Laden* scroll scroll by Chandan Chitrakar.
Pigment on paper.



Figure 14: First frame of *Tsunami* scroll by Mantu Chitrakar. Pigment on paper.

The first and sometimes the last frames of traditional scrolls are disjunct from the other frames that depict the episodes in the story in that they serve to place the story in the mythic universe so that it resonates with other stories about gods and goddesses.

How does the narrative persona of bin Laden emerge? As I have already mentioned, the pictorial story follows a path that is different from the song that accompanies it. The song emphasizes the war and, in some songs, the enormity of the tragedy, dwelling on the suffering of the victims. Yet it is completely silent on the tension between the demonic and the saintly aspects of the bin Laden persona shown so effectively in successive examples of the Laden scroll.⁹ It was Swarna's experiments with facialization that gave the initial creative impulse in developing the Laden story—a story that developed pictorially rather than through the song.

In what situation does the bin Laden image emerge? Many compositions about cataclysmic events, such as the Tsunami, use facializing techniques, anthropomorphizing nature's fury to effectively portray pathos and tragedy (see figure 14 by Mantu).¹⁰ It was Swarna's deployment of the face in a new way that gave the image its affective charge. She separated the face from its traditional context where it framed scenes of natural disaster and thereby drained it of its conventional demonic attributes. She then extracted a face from another image from the Chitrakar repertoire—the figure of the *pir* or holy man and placed it in this new narrative. In the process some of the attributes associated with the figure of the *pir* were transferred to the bin Laden narrative.

Swarna had not foreseen the impact that this substitution of faces would have for the larger story. In her first attempt at painting the 9/11 story, she had experimented with different facial types to bring out a range of affects—the terror of the impact enhanced by an impassive bearded face—bin Laden's demonic aspect as well as a more pathetic, tearful face that she attached to a fire engine in the subsequent frame of the scroll. But

no other artists took up this motif and Swarna herself dropped it in later versions of the scroll. It seemed incapable of generating the creative spark. Swarna's addition of the bearded face atop the killer plane was probably an attempt to incorporate a well established Chitrakar technique of anthropomorphizing cataclysmic events to enhance their dramatic effect. Her originality lay in eschewing the standard demonic features of such faces to enhance the magnitude of the calamities being represented. Instead, her face is impassive—a 'reflecting surface' according to Deleuze (1989), that mirrors the affects that flow from the surrounding scene—not just scenes of fury as suggested by the first register of the scroll but also scenes of hope and re-generation as depicted in the last register. Thus her innovation in the story first composed by her brother Manu carries the potential for a new storyline that she did not herself develop. Rather, the theme crystallized as other artists picked it up and started experimenting with the motif of the bearded face, juxtaposing it with other images and placing it in new contexts, thus allowing for contrasting values to emerge through the figure of Osama bin Laden—the demonic with the saintly.

Deleuze (2004) says that repetition has to be understood in terms of habitual activities that change imperceptibly as they adapt themselves to varying contexts. Variability is thus an intrinsic property of repetition. Swarna's adaptation of the traditional demonic face invites us into a new context in which we are no longer faced with an anonymous, authorless event, but one that is authored and therefore singular, which allows the pictorial narrative to develop in ways that are unprecedented. To use a term coined by Deleuze she was able to 'deterritorialize' the face and free its affective potential (Deleuze and Guattari 2004). An example of territorialisation from *The Thousand Plateaus* by Deleuze and Guattari (2004), is that of an animal whose incessant prowling and marking of its parameter creates a notion of territory (see also Williams 2003). Thus, when some part contained within this territory becomes detached and travels elsewhere, it carries traces from its previous locations along with it. The body is one such space marked out as a personal territory by individuals through habitual practice. But the face is one aspect of this personalized territory that is easily detachable. Thus, as Deleuze says, that the face has to be considered as separate from the body in that it has 'sacrificed most of its motoricity in order to become the support for organs of reception...' (1986: 87). It has lost the 'movement of extension' characteristic of the body and has instead acquired the 'movement of expression'. The mask-like properties of the face allow it to become an agent of what Deleuze calls deterritorialization, relocating traits that have become habitual through repetitive practice in new milieus. This is precisely what happens with the Osama face in the *Laden* scrolls.

The mask-face, or the face as a reflecting surface, provokes attention and possible interpretation. It establishes the potential grid that will make signification possible. It enables the fixing of signs and the potential for textualization or reading. Thus picture storytelling in the Chitrakar tradition uses the potential of the mask-face to align the lyrics of the song that is being sung with the images that the performer unfolds. The performer keeps pointing to images in frames that are successively unrolled before

the audience, in tandem with the song that she sings, thus using her finger to draw attention to aspects of the event being narrated in the song. The images anticipate the words that will quicken them and bring them into meaning, as it were. But precisely because the image exceeds the text in its ability to suggest possible acts of interpretation, it also enables new kinds of readings. Thus the Osama mask-face in the *Laden* scroll, detached from its traditional context as the face of a holy man in a religious story, is re-territorialized in the 9/11 story. But the traits that this face carries from its previous contexts influence the milieu in which it now finds itself, allowing for a different reading of the bin Laden story. Paradoxically this reading has never been actualized in the songs composed on the 9/11 theme, leaving the face silent, an enigma waiting to be narrativized.

Let us now return to the relationship between creativity and repetition that was posited at the beginning of this section. Repetition, for Deleuze, is an attentiveness to the singular that does not presuppose multiple occurrences of the same (Chang: 1999). It is by paying close attention to specific details depicted in the song and the pictorial scroll that the narrative grows as it circulates from one artist to another, as we saw. When Swarna received the 9/11 story from her brother, she chose not to experiment with the song but rather focused her attention on the first two frames of the pictorial scroll. By putting a face on the killer plane she not only enhances the dramatic potential of the pictorial story but also gives greater coherence and simplicity to the storyline, allowing the focus of attention to rest on the Bush-bin Laden relationship and the intimate face of enmity, of a friendship gone horribly wrong—an important mythic theme in this narrative universe. Other artists who borrowed Swarna's motif of the bearded face explored other possible connotations by going to other stories where such a face might surface, as I have shown. Thus there is a creative vibration caused by the repeated occurrence of the same motif, both within different frames of the same scroll and across different scrolls.

But why do I focus on Swarna as the innovator rather than Manu who was the original composer of the 9/11 story?¹¹ It is because only after the subplot in Manu's story, about the Bengali boy who died in the crash, was dropped that the story began to circulate. Swarna's innovation created a spark and can be regarded as the onset of a series of innovations that helped to make the *Laden* story what it is today and establish it as a part of the collective repertoire of stories for the chitrakar community in Bengal. More importantly for this essay, the elaborate discussion of the 9/11 scroll will help throw fresh light on Roman Jakobson's (1966) idea of collective creativity, mentioned in the introduction. As I have tried to show, the impulse of creation inheres in the process of circulation itself, as each artist contributes to the process by dwelling on particular motifs that may not be central to the overall storyline at first sight. Stories emerge in a plural fashion, as assemblages made up of formulaic motifs that often carry traces of past narratives with them. It is by dwelling on such motifs that something novel and exciting may emerge.¹²

Comic Books and Chitrakar Narratives

The pictorial narrative of 9/11 emerged within a particular genre of bardic performance in which each frame of the scroll is arranged to form a tableau. The performer guides the audience through the scene with the help of her index finger, picking out the relevant images mentioned in the song. Since it is the lyrics of the song that provide the meaning of each scene, one finds considerable variation in the interpretation given to the pictorial images. Take for example the telephonic conversation between Bush and bin Laden in the second frame of Tagar's scroll (figure 2). The telephone motif is interpreted by many performers as signalling the intimacy in their relationship, a relationship that suddenly transformed itself into enmity with tragic consequences for the world at large. Rani Chitrakar enacted this narrative for me using Tagar's scroll but her interpretation was radically different (see foot note 2). She glossed over this scene and instead read the telephone motif as signifying the global aspect of the tragic event and the fact that it happened in a distant land. Her song emphasized the anguish of parents who had to hear about their children's death long distance via telephone without even a glimpse of their bodies in death.

Chitrakar narratives are open-ended, revealing a relationship of dissonance between the lyrics of the song and the images on the scroll. It is this variability that has enabled the pictorial narrative on 9/11 to develop along lines that are independent of the musical text. This fact also allowed the story to adapt itself to another narrative medium that also explores the dissonance between words and images, as we shall now see.

In 2008, a group of Chitrakar artists from Naya village were invited to a workshop by Tara Books, an innovative publishing house in Chennai that often collaborates with folk artists from different parts of India to produce illustrated storybooks. Influenced perhaps by the alternative comics culture developing in urban India, the creative team at Tara wanted to explore the possibility of translating the Chitrakar style of pictorial storytelling into the comics medium (Stoll 2012). The participants of the workshop included five Chitrakar artists, three members from the Tara team, and graphic novelist Orijit Sen, whose pioneering work in this medium has helped establish the alternative comics culture in India. As a long-time activist with an interest in folk expressivity, Orijit was best suited to work with the Chitrakar artists, none of whom had any exposure to this medium. I had accompanied the artists to Chennai, and as a facilitator at the workshop I was privy to the interactions between the various participants. The workshop began with a lecture demonstration by Orijit, who explained the structure of the comics' narrative with examples from his own work, and then the artists were asked to depict a story of their own choosing in this new medium. Since this was an exploratory workshop, the artists were told that they did not have to worry about the final outcome of their efforts. Since most folk artists in India are quite worried about the future of their art traditions in a highly mediated environment, the Chitrakars were quite excited about the potential that this new narrative medium might have for extending the audience base for their storytelling form.



Figure 15: First page of *Laden* story by Mantu Chitrakar. Pencil on paper.

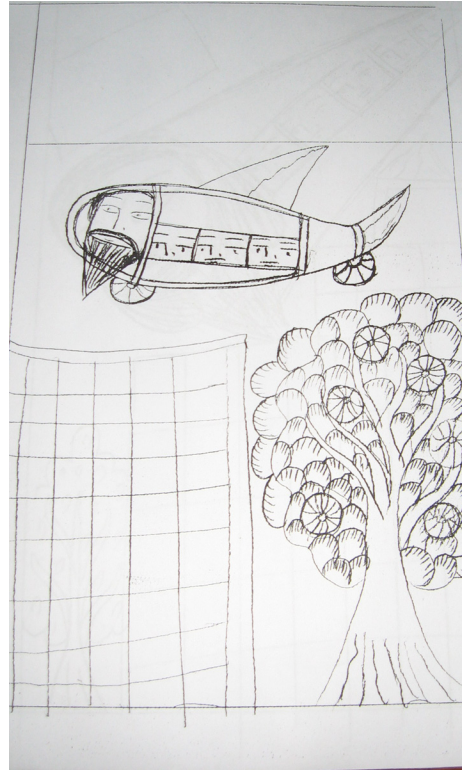


Figure 16: Second page of *Laden* story by Mantu Chitrakar. Pencil on paper.

One of the artists, Mantu Chitrakar, decided to use the 9/11 story for his experiment, thinking that this would be most easily understood to an audience unfamiliar with the Chitrakar repertoire of stories. But certain difficulties based on structural differences between the two mediums soon surfaced. The Chitrakar style of composition is improvisatory and open ended. Composers of both songs and pictures think of the narrative text in terms of episodic blocks that are stitched together with the help of formulaic motifs (Lord 1976). The events that form the basis of these stories are true and often as in the case of 9/11 have reverberations that are felt across time, shaping the structure of everyday life. Traditionally such events were sacralised in Indian storytelling traditions and interpreted within a mythic framework. Stories organized according to such frameworks generally move between two temporal registers—the diachronic register, or time as succession, and the synchronic one in which events are viewed in simultaneity (Lévi-Strauss 1977). This double structure allows the events that make up these stories to open up to other times and places while participating in the weave of our everyday lives.

The narratives themselves are composed by stitching together episodic blocks and themes rather than in terms of plot structures. These themes are well known and



Figure 17: Third page of *Laden* story by Mantu Chitrakar. Pencil on paper.



Figure 18: Fourth page of *Laden* story by Mantu Chitrakar. Pencil on paper.

narrators use formulaic devices to signal the episodes to come. Thus in the case of the 9/11 pictorial story the composers gather together a series of affective images guided by the general framework of the disaster narrative and its pictorial scroll—motifs such as the demonic face that signifies the scale of the tragedy, airplanes and reporters with cameras to signal that these are secular and contemporary stories, and so on. Swarna's departure from this convention led her to substitute the face of a demon with that of a man with a beard. This allowed, on the one hand, the beard to be used as a diacritical mark so that its presence or absence could distinguish the two sets of players in this narrative, but since bearded faces are usually associated with *pir* figures in this tradition, allowed an alternate framing to emerge on the other. This semantic feature has remained a subtext of the narrative—confined to the scroll—and since the song does not detail the physical appearance of Osama bin Laden, or George Bush for that matter, there is no mention of the *pir* motif in its text.

Given the fact that Chitrakar storytellers tend to focus on the emotional effects evoked by the events rather than the events themselves, how did Mantu respond to the challenge of composing in a narrative form that is emphatically plot-centric? The execution of comics' stories usually begins by deciding on page length, page layout, the number of panels on a page and so on. Other important structural features, such

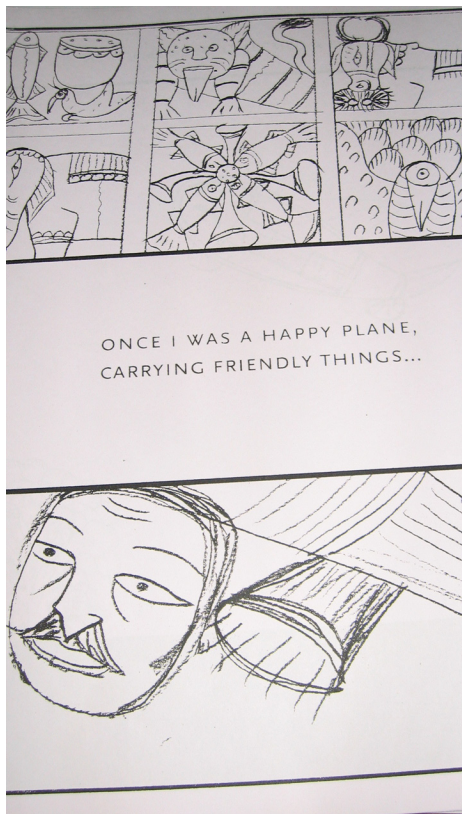


Figure 19: First page of reworked *Laden* story by Mantu Chitrakar. Pencil on paper.

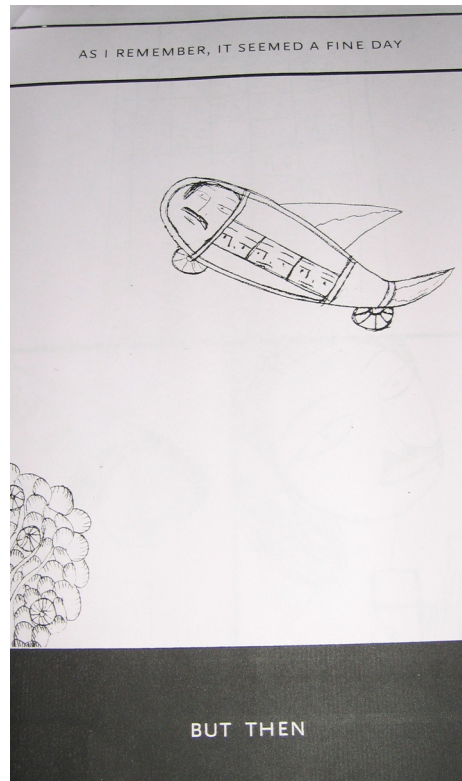


Figure 20: Second page of reworked *Laden* story by Mantu Chitrakar. Pencil on paper.

as the role played by the narrator within the story, and the background and diegetical context in which the events in the story occur, are also absent from the Chitrakar mode, as it is assumed that all stories are known in advance and nothing is ever narrated for the first time. This is a common feature of myths and storytelling traditions inflected by a mythic universe. Thus, as we have seen, even secular events like the 9/11 event become mythicized in the chitrakar rendering of it.¹³ Another stylistic feature at odds with the comics mode is the fact that Chitrakar narrations are usually in the third person with sporadic interjections in the first person, especially when it is necessary to emphasize an emotional point in the story.

Mantu was quite excited by a sample story that Orijit showed in his lecture demonstration, in which the chief protagonist is a machine. Mantu felt that the anthropomorphized airplane that figures in the *Laden* scroll could be the narrator as well as main protagonist of his comics' story. The 9/11 story would be told from the airplane's point of view, in the voice of the plane or whatever was left of it after the crash. He then had to find a suitable location in which to place the narrator so that it could tell its story before a suitable audience. After some discussion with the other artists he decided that a museum would be a logical place to house the narrator, as it is

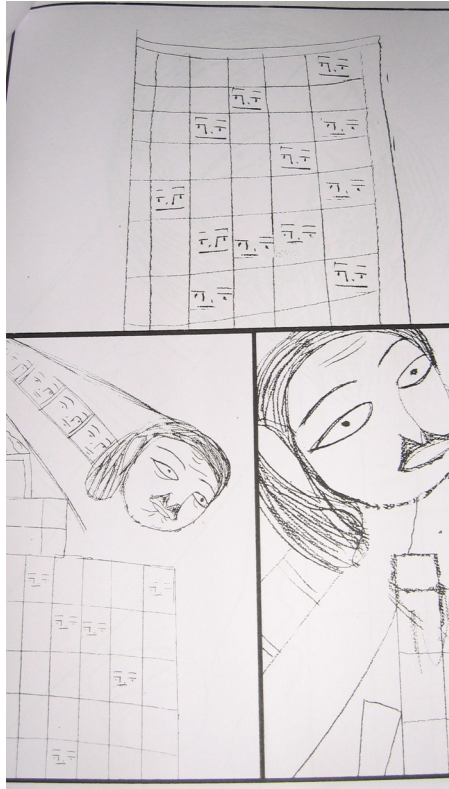


Figure 21: Third page of reworked *Laden* story by Mntu Chitrakar. Pencil on paper.

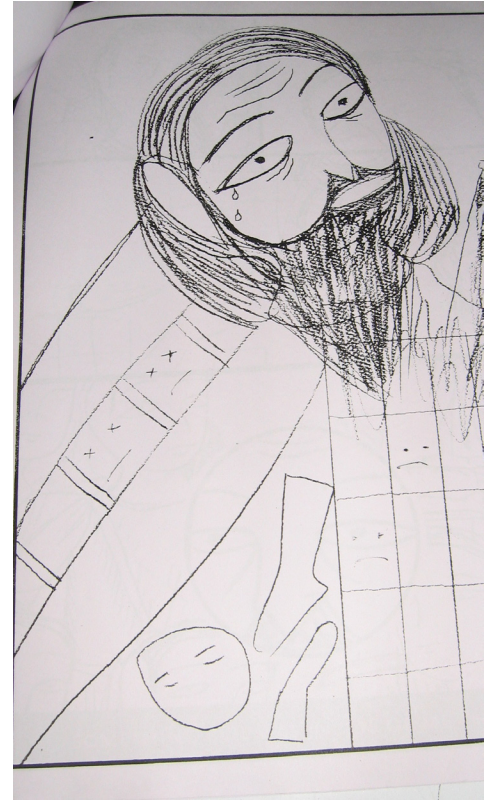


Figure 22: Third page of Mantu's original *Laden* story. Pencil on paper.

likely that fragments of such a famous object would find their final destination in such a place. However, the actual construction of an event-based narrative with a discrete plot structure that had a definite beginning and end was extremely difficult. Chitrakar narrators assume that their audiences already know the stories of the events that they narrate, and as performers their chief role is to evoke a range of emotions (*rasa*). Mantu was able to achieve a break-down of the actual event of the crash into phases that could then be empanelled in the comics' style but the construction of a suitable ending proved to be elusive (see figures 15-23).

He used the idea of flexible panel size to good effect on the first page, arranging a series of small rectangles at the top of the first page, filling them with his favourite images of butterflies, cows, tigers etc. and the iconic killer plane below, unframed—its face directed toward a group of museum visitors positioned just beneath as if to suggest that a storytelling session is underway. The rest of the story was to be shown as a flashback with full page panels showing the airplane coming closer and closer to the tower, cutting to a scene depicting the devastation wrought by the crash. When I remarked on the images of animals and insects on the first page he said that he was



Figure 23: Last page of Mantu's reworked *Laden* story. Pigment on paper.

air as it were, not suggesting any specific direction. The text at the bottom conveys the mood, "Once I was a happy plane." From the second frame onward, however, the airplane is oriented toward the Tower as if to suggest that its goal has now changed and is focused on destruction. The absence of the beard from the face of the airplane in the first few panels helps to make visible the transformation in personality (figures 19-23). The bearded plane now signifies an evil personality, mirroring bin Laden's face, reinforced by the text in the last panel, "Something evil was in me that day" that shows a close up of the face against the backdrop of corpses (figure 23). The chain of signification set up by the conflation of beard-bin Laden-monstrous act was avoided, however, by the addition of teardrops to the face of the bearded plane as it approaches the Tower, as if to suggest that the plane was a victim of circumstance and not a willing participant in this terrible event (figure 22).

Mantu had suggested the addition of the teardrops after the subtitles on each page were translated for him. He noted that, "Something evil was in me that day" could just

trying to depict a room in a museum with display cabinets filled with curious and beautiful things.

Mantu's drawings were then worked upon by David, one of the Tara team members who used photoshop to show Mantu how his images could be modified to become characters in a comic book story, showing, in the process, the significant structural contrasts between the two narrative types. Guided by Orijit, the comics' specialist, and Mantu's choice of the damaged plane as narrator, David turned to science fiction to humanize the plane. With a minimum of words and a few judicious adjustments to Mantu's drawings of the airplane, David transformed the story into an exploration of the latter's subjective life. The removal of the beard from the airplane's face in the first frame of the flashback helped to suggest a disjunction between the beginning and the end of the story, giving it a discrete, bounded fairytale-like structure very different from the open-ended mythic-like quality that the Chitrakar stories tend to show. Thus, in David's re-worked version of Mantu's

story the first frame of the flashback shows the airplane in a horizontal position, in mid

air as it were, not suggesting any specific direction.

The text at the bottom conveys the mood, "Once I was a happy plane." From the second frame onward, however, the airplane is oriented toward the Tower as if to suggest that its goal has now changed and is focused on destruction. The absence of the beard from the face of the airplane in the first few panels helps to make visible the transformation in personality (figures 19-23). The bearded plane now signifies an evil personality, mirroring bin Laden's face, reinforced by the text in the last panel, "Something evil was in me that day" that shows a close up of the face against the backdrop of corpses (figure 23). The chain of signification set up by the conflation of beard-bin Laden-monstrous act was avoided, however, by the addition of teardrops to the face of the bearded plane as it approaches the Tower, as if to suggest that the plane was a victim of circumstance and not a willing participant in this terrible event (figure 22).

Mantu had suggested the addition of the teardrops after the subtitles on each page were translated for him. He noted that, "Something evil was in me that day" could just

as well refer to the hijackers inside the plane—it did not have to refer to any kind of agency on the part of the airplane. Mantu's interpretation points to another important difference between the two narrative forms—Chitrakar narratives, like traditional folk tales in many parts of the world, show the narrative progressions that befall their protagonists, and the characters' actions, but do not generally explore their inner states. Characters may speak, and even express emotion, but only at a few key moments. Most of the narrative uses the third person mode, as I have said. The paratactic format of Chitrakar compositions, whether in words or paintings, allows different voices and points of view to co-exist.¹⁴ In comics' this is achieved by juxtaposing different types of panels as well as by varying the font size of words that appear next to the images in the panels. David used the gutter—the blank spaces between the panels on a page—to shift between different points of view in the narrative. He also positioned the voice-over texts in the gutter on each page to link the different points of view into a coherent plot. In Mantu's story the self of the chief protagonist has to be shown changing over time. David used subtle clues to suggest this change, not merely by varying the direction and appearance of the plane, but also by using the expressive potential of the plane's shape. Graphic novels often vary the size and shape of the panels on a page to suggest shifts in time, mood, and point of view. The last page of David's re-working of Mantu's narrative is especially striking: a circle, with a close up of the plane's demonic face, is positioned as an inset within a larger rectangular panel that depicts the scene of destruction (figure 23).

I feel that it was the added text that served to change the way in which we might read the story—shifting it from a grand to a more reduced human scale. This shift in interpretation has something to do with the nature of the storytelling enabled by the workshop. Discussions of image and text in the graphic novel genre seem to suggest that the overall conceptualisation and script precedes the actual drawing of images in the organization of the production process. There is a strict hierarchy of functions, so that a storyboard with text in the supporting speech balloons, background story, and detailed instructions about the image on each panel is given to the artists who illustrate the stories (McLain 2009). Even though the workshop, being exploratory in nature, did not organize the artists' work in this fashion we see that comics' production works with a strictly hierarchical mode in which each facet of story production, from plot to character development to page layout, are synchronized according to an overarching plan. Mantu's difficulty in proceeding with his story was because Chitrakar narratives work by adding scenes, often widely divergent from each other, with the aid of conjunctive motifs (Lord 1976, see also foot note 10).

Comics belong to primarily writing cultures, i.e. cultures that have interiorized writing, and Chitrakar narratives to an oral one. The linear, continuous, and progressive structure of comics' stories emerges from the thing-like properties of the written word or words that have left a residue on paper (Ong 2002). In contrast, spoken words are evanescent—when we hear them they are on the verge of disappearing. Oral habits of expression and composition therefore tend to rely on formulaic elements and other repetitive devices to remember and consolidate what has been said. Chitrakar narratives

in both verbal as well as painterly aspects are shaped by an oral/aural sensibility in which language is a mode of action, embedded in an interactive context. This is why the stories do not need to dwell on the context in which events and actions unfold. Much of this is already known in advance or suggested by the formulaic devices used by the narrator to stitch different episodes together—"storyable" episodes that circulate in a mnemonic store-house with the potential for becoming narrativizable if the narrator sees fit. Comics' stories that are embedded in a culture of writing are based on the prior de-contextualization of the word and therefore have to build context within the narrative itself, as we saw in Orijit's insistence that Mantu's protagonist, who was also the narrator of his story, had to be placed within a physical space in which the event of narration could unfold.

The *Laden* narrative crystallized while the hunt for Osama bin Laden was still on. Mantu tried his hand at composing a new *Laden* scroll after news of bin Laden's dramatic death reached him in Naya village. He removed the last frame of the scroll that showed bin Laden enshrined in a cave and replaced it with his bloody corpse watched over by rifle wielding soldiers. But this addition to bin Laden's story did not draw much attention either from the community of painters or potential buyers of the scroll. Bin Laden's mysterious disappearance had given an affective charge to the Chitrakar story, leading to a lot of experimentation by painters—especially with beginnings and endings. When reality took over and the sequence of events became clear the narrative lost its subjunctive potential.

By Way of Conclusion

The essay seems to have ventured far afield from the questions about craft techniques, collective creation, and individuation with which I began this essay. Craft techniques require habitual practice by which the body is made to function like an automaton, producing rhythmic movements that do not require conscious thought. Scholars like Ananda Coomaraswamy (1990) have said that it is only under such conditions that craft techniques that require embodiment tend to be embedded in interactive contexts very different from the kind of self-conscious detachment required by modern art practices. Coomaraswamy views traditional artworks as coherent wholes reflecting a form of social organization that is hierarchical and not receptive to change. In contrast to this view, we see Chitrakar compositions conceived as assemblages of heterogeneous parts without an overarching binding organization. Motifs become detached from their original context and can produce new kinds of affects leading to new compositions, as we have seen. Much of this happens by serendipity rather than conscious plan. The process of de-familiarization brought about by substituting a *pir's* face for the more traditional demonic one associated with disaster narrative produces other changes in the pictorial narrative as connotative images associated with the *pir* motif rise to the surface of memory and are incorporated willy-nilly into the scroll. But even if we accept that Swarna's innovation in the *Laden* scroll does not emerge as a deliberate act of self-authorization or as an attempt at arrogating a unique artistic voice and signature for herself, what about Mantu's experiment with the comics' form? Surely

his foray into an unfamiliar medium negates the idea of unselfconscious composition? It is precisely because Mantu had not been able to internalize the formal code of the comics' narrative even though he could understand it cognitively that he found it so difficult to formulate a plot. However David, who had far greater familiarity with the comics' form, was able re-constitute Mantu's images in a story that could fit its narrative format. What we see is the emergence of something entirely novel through a process of adaptation by which traditional elements come to be re-configured in new milieus.

Craft is conceived as a form of embodied practice in which innovations occur through ways of doing rather than appearing as consciously thought out in advance by the artist who then stamps it with his or her authorial signature. Does this make the folk artist a passive vehicle, transmitting traditions whose import s/he may not be fully aware of or be able to explain and comment upon? My intention in juxtaposing two contrasting modes of narrativizing the 9/11 crash is to show how folk artists may be quite aware of the formal requirements of their art practices and be able to play with them, absorbing influences from an ever-changing narrative environment. Thus stylistic features such as fragmentation—the deliberate detachment of an element from its familiar milieu to enhance emotional affects in comics—have been taken up enthusiastically by artists such as Mantu Chitrakar. Thus the motif of the bearded face detached from its conventional setting atop a mounted human body—a familiar figure in *pir* stories—now acquires a new value when it is used to facify a non-human subject who emerges as a narrator of his own story in Mantu's experiment with the comics' form.

It was the semiotician Charles Peirce (1960) who said that signs are meaningful only to the extent that they can be translated into other signs. Their efficacy as living signs lies in their ability to circulate—to be used in different contexts, sometimes in unanticipated ways. In the course of circulation they also carry traces of these different usages thereby enabling a future for the systems of which they form a part. If we substitute images for the signs, then Peirce's statement aptly sums up the argument that I have tried to make in this essay.

Notes

- 1 I am grateful to Anthony Bak Buccitelli and the anonymous referees for the shape that this paper has taken.
- 2 I tend to prefer the feminine pronouns 'she' and 'her' over the masculine variants to indicate the fact that there are numerous women artists in the folk tradition that I am discussing here. I also use a combined form s/he wherever possible.
- 3 "Pir" is derived from the Persian and used to designate "a Muslim spiritual guide renowned for his ability to translate spiritual achievement into practical achievement to aid supplicants" (Stewart 2002:22).
- 4 Scholars like Tony Stewart are critical of the way in which the term syncretism is used as it suggests a set of confused and temporary beliefs and religious practices that emerge when

two or more religions are co-present. Shrines dedicated to celebrated *pirs* have existed for centuries and attract devotees of all faiths. Such faith cannot be called confused by any stretch of the imagination. I still use the term however because it is used to celebrate the pluralistic worldview and culture characteristic of artisanal communities in India.

- 5 Khandu Chitrakar – private conversation in Naya in 2006.
- 6 My selection of the 9/11 story was determined by two factors:- 1) The fact that I could trace the initial moments of composition and following the changes that were taking place as it crystallized – a situation that is quite rare in fieldwork. 2) I assume that a discussion of a global theme will be easier for audiences who have no familiarity with Indian mythology to follow. At first site it may seem that there is no innovation possible where traditional themes are concerned. On the contrary, as the focus of artistic attention is increasingly concentrated on the scroll innovations in the pictorial images of gods and goddesses are also taking place (Chatterji 2015). New compositions based on new renditions of traditional epics are also taking place.
- 7 A cyclorama is a stage set shaped like a circular diorama to convey an impression of distance.
- 8 I have translated two of the *Laden* songs from Bangla—this is the first by Khandu Chitrakar:

O the event in Amerika
Tis a wonderous event
The plane crash in Amerika
What a wonderous event
That hundred storied house broke
O what a wonderous event
Bush says Laden
Was this your real intention
O what a wonderous event
Bush says O Laden
Was it your intention to deceive
O what a wonderous event
Teams [of soldiers] went to war
And look Bush's people died
And look at Laden laugh
O the plane crash in Amerika
What a wonderous event
They went to war
In teams they went [from Laden's side]
But they could not fight against Bush
Bush's soldiers went after Laden
But look Laden hid in a cave
Look they could not catch him
O the plane crash in Amerika
O what a wonderous event

- 9 As we see Rani Chitrakar's song given below is very different from the one composed by Khandu:
- In Amerika, in Washinton
 There was destruction
 Because of the plane crash there was decimation
 O God, O Merciful One
 What kind of recompense is this
 In 2001, 11 September
 In New York in Washington
 The house broke into four pieces
 In New York in Washington
 There was destruction
 Laden and George Bush were friends
 When did this enmity occur
 Why did hundreds and hundreds of people have to lose their lives
 I do not know
 In Amerika, in Washington
 There was decimation
- 10 This is a different artist from Manu, the one who first composed the bin Laden story.
- 11 Manu is the first time composer of many new stories based on political themes such as the Gulf War etc. but they have achieved the same kind of popularity as the 9/11 story.
- 12 The inspiration for this part of my argument is Albert Lord's (1976) seminal work on oral narration where he shows how bards stitch together episodic blocks of narrative using formulaic motifs. These motifs have more than a mere decorative purpose as they help the narrator and the audience to anticipate the direction in which the narrative may move. Even though Lord's work was confined to oral epics I think that his argument can be extended to other modes of composition and narration.
- 13 I use the term 'myth' to refer to a narrative form that assumes knowledge of a narrative universe in which all stories are related in a synchronic fashion. Stories, therefore, do not need to have discrete beginnings and endings. It is assumed that listeners are born into the narrative universe and one is never told a myth for the first time—one already knows the story in advance and each new telling reveals a different facet of a character or event. Thus a myth is never framed in the way a fairy tale may be, 'Once upon a time...'. One myth refers to another and characters in one myth may have different lives or participate in different storylines in others (Lévi-Strauss 1975).
- 14 Deleuze and Guattari call this kind of structure a rhizome whose fabric is made up of conjunctions like and... and... and (1988: 25).

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The Tactical Trail: Sense of Place and Place of Practice

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Abstract

In the early 1980s, Michel de Certeau distinguished between the “strategies” and “tactics” utilized by the walker in a modern cityscape: the prescribed bounds for action within an environment and the resistive, independent movements of the individual. This essay complicates the distinction by recognizing folk practice as a category between strategies and tactics, both culturally guided and spontaneously innovative. Building from fieldwork conducted on nature/wilderness trails, it considers walkers not as independent nodes but as spontaneous communities, and promotes further understanding of the ever-recycling, mutual relationship between the sense of a place and the actions taken within it.

The American nature preserve is a place of reverence for the natural environment where visitors can pass carefully through a space preserved from development and construction, reflect on the beauty or value of the natural world, and, in moving through with a careful, temporary, and non-invasive gait, play a personal role in protecting and respecting the Earth and its ecosystems. The trails that pass through nature parks and preserves, conservancies, and arboretums invite visitors to view and appreciate the plants, animals, waterways, and terrain by curving gently around fragile elements of the landscape and animal habitats. They choreograph visitor movement through the space in a continuous line of motion from visitor center or parking lot to specific viewing platforms or educational plaques, then back again. Trailhead markers, signs, and visitor guides instruct visitors to attend to specific features in the environment and often explicitly prohibit actions that could harm the plants, animals, or broader ecosystem. The majority of visitors to such parks and preserves approach the trails in a similar way, with reverence and appreciation and a similar sense of the place and its worth. They follow the trails marked by maps and signs and Park Service instructions, knowing that to follow these trails is to perform their own respect for ecology and environmental preservation. And yet, at the site of a fallen log blocking movement along the sanctioned path, at a particularly muddy spot in the morning after a summer rain, or, perhaps, at a point where the parking lot or toilet facility in view lies just beyond an acre of open prairie, foot-worn dirt lines routinely divert from the sanctioned paths and cut across the preserved environment, adapting and compromising the sense of place as one of reverent preservation. “Desire paths,” “social trails,” or “goat tracks”—those improvised footpaths running alongside or explicitly apart from official avenues for movement—exist in a place of

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nature preservation, at once infringing on the sense of place and allowing movement through it. And yet, the individual who walks along such a trail is not exactly breaking interdiction, wantonly tossing aside preservation for personal ease; rather, he or she is taking part in a communal performance of place, even in the absence of a shared community. That is, the visitor's transgressive, non-sanctioned movement along such a trail is excused because others have visibly moved in the same way through the environment before.

The uniquely visible case of the nature preserve social trail demonstrates how practice both adheres to social precedent and, in adhering, perpetuates it through performance. In selecting a path of movement by following the visible trace in the grass, snow, or ground left by others passing through at an earlier time, the visitor adheres to social conventions; by walking that path, though, s/he also literally carves the path more deeply, making it more visible and inviting to those who will in the future follow. This case gives observable, material form to a key concept in practice theory: structuration, the reproduction or, conversely, subversion of structures through *individual acts of repetition* (Giddens 1984).

This essay considers the case of park and preserve nature trails to illustrate how practice theory can inform cultural analysis of place-making and sense of place, and also to provide a model for thinking about how individuals play a role in place making. I argue that we should re-think common uses of Michel de Certeau's (1988) terms, "strategies" and "tactics," to more fully recognize the everyday foundations of place-making. The on-the-ground "tactical choices" made in any given location by others whom we may never have encountered nonetheless guide, encourage, and constrain our own subsequent choices, and this collective and collaborative tactical experience over time results in shared understandings in and of that location. I also present an initial framework for thinking about this everyday construction of place in so-called "natural" areas as such parks and preserves grow in popularity.

An "A-ha" Moment: Walking Sticks, Practice, and Sense of Place

As an American folklorist, I have spent the better part of my career working with and learning from hoofers, hikers, and wilderness enthusiasts—nature pilgrims in search of communion not necessarily with God but with the comparably numinous natural environment. My informants are self-described environmentalists, wilderness enthusiasts, backcountry campers, and, occasionally, modern-day wildmen. They journey on foot over rough terrain in search of that unsullied sublime location, that special *place*—whether it be a mountaintop or secluded valley, popular park or private plot—where humankind's thumbprint seems not so heavy, and where that elusive sense of purity, of clarity, of escape (however one might define it) can be achieved.

Yet this sense of nature place can also be problematic. For instance, when a bird flies across the boundary of a preserved natural space, it maintains its course of flight. When wind crosses the boundary and spreads fallen leaves or seeds, the leaves fall the same on either side of the boundary line. When water runs across the boundary,

it carries with it all the same sediment and plant life and animal life, regardless of the line. But when human visitors to the nature preserve cross the line, they often change their behavior, hushing their tones, turning off electronics, or approaching their surroundings in a nature-reverent way not as common in home or city environments. In recent years, American ecologists and environmental activists have wrestled with this problem, to make more people constantly aware that the ecosystem extends beyond the nature preserve or national wilderness and into the suburbs, the cities, and individual backyards. It is a matter of overcoming the popular distinction between “nature” and “culture” in the American tradition, one that historian William Cronon (1996) refers to as the “trouble with wilderness.”

“Wilderness,” Cronon notes, is more a state of mind than it is any actual place, but it is also a useful term for promoting ecological campaigns and articulating that mixed sensation of the unfamiliar and the awe-inspiring that many people feel when wandering through a forested hillside or desert expanse. The allure of “wilderness” and the need to protect it is celebrated by environmental organizations like the Wilderness Society and the U.S. National Wilderness Preserve System. It is memorialized in print and pop culture every time we talk about going “into the woods,” “back to nature,” or “into the wild.” Yet there is trouble with wilderness, too. In Cronon’s celebrated words, it “quietly expresses and reproduces the very values its devotees seek to reject” (1996, 80). That is, in perpetuating the term and a distinction between wilderness and civilization, nature and culture, wilderness and nature lovers may actually be keeping themselves from adopting more ecologically sound ways of thinking and acting.

Any “place” is ultimately interpreted through the words, stories, and other objects that surround it, but “wilderness” and “nature” are unique in the way the frames themselves seem to suggest *unfiltered* experience, free from human interference, definition, or constraint. In fact, in the United States, many official wilderness spaces (including the case example later in this essay) are explicitly groomed and maintained by human actions while the discursive frames that guide visitor experience suggest the very opposite. That is, sometimes a location explicitly labeled as “natural space” is also the explicit product of human actions, landscape restoration, planting, and preservation. As Kevin Michael DeLuca reminds us, wilderness “is not a natural fact—it is a political achievement” (2001, 645); it “does not preexist the human but instead is a human product” (637).

From and with my informants I have learned a great deal about how this human product comes to be, and about the relationship between place and practice. In years past, I have written on the role of storytelling in place-construction, sharing the legends, tales, memorates, and personal experience narratives that pilgrims to nature themselves exchange, and analyzing how those stories contribute to the creation and interpretation of wilderness locations—how for instance a misty wooded slope, just miles from the nearest town, can accrue a palpable aura of mystery and wonder through and by the narrative frames that surround it (Schmitt 2013).

Yet, over time, in my field observations, it became clear that some part of the cultural imagining of place and transmission of that imagining was happening outside of

immediate social interaction. That is, the deep wilderness locations that my informants revere are identifiable in large part due to their absence of other people. The experiences of the hikers and backpackers on the trail is frequently one of solitude. The stories and conversations alone could not fully account for how nature and wilderness practices continued over time.

And, so, with this new focus on what we might call folklore in absence of (a physically present) folk, I reconsidered the question of folklore and place from a slightly different angle. There have been excellent studies on linguistic place construction, exemplified by the work of Kent Ryden (1993), Mary Hufford (1992), and humanist geographers like Yi-Fu Tuan (1991), and other fantastic studies on the construction of place through communal practice. We are pretty much all in agreement that for the folklorist and ethnographer, what we call place is never merely a context or setting for expression; rather, it is a crucial component and result of the expression itself. So when I went out into the field again this past summer, I aimed to get at the nitty-gritty underpinnings of this relationship in a way I had not explored them before. Specifically, in my work with so-called “wilderness” or “natural” locations, I wanted to interrogate how folklore and sense or experience of place are related in locations where the folk community is not always evident, is not always explicit, is not always even physically present. I wanted to ask, in places understood as “natural wilderness,” relatively separate from human or cultural mediation and clear-cut signifiers, how one’s sense of place is ultimately developed.

To do this, I went once more into the woods, this time along the southern edge of Lake Superior in northern Wisconsin, to the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore (AINL). The Lakeshore is a federally protected recreation space and home to the Gaylord Nelson Wilderness, a 35,000-acre federally designated wilderness area as of 2004. The Nelson Wilderness makes up roughly 80 percent of the AINL territory, which also includes twenty-one of the twenty-two Apostle Islands. The area is home to hundreds—perhaps thousands—of trails for visitor movement and at the entrance to each, visitors are instructed to stay on these trails in order to both 1) provide passing human access to the “wilderness” space and 2) ensure that this access is indeed only passing, physically disrupting as little as possible by constraining human movement to the prescribed trail course.

It is a place where the “folk” are few and far between. In fact, in rustling around and looking for field subjects, it was not unusual on some days for me to see more deer than people, and, more often than not, when I did find people, I would not see others again for an hour or so.

It was on about the third or fourth day, just at the entry to the wilderness trailhead at Meyers Beach, that I had one of those “a-ha” moments you occasionally get in the field—one of those realizations that in retrospect is perhaps painfully obvious but that also allows a kind of crucial insight into the questions you have been asking all along. It happened as I approached the trailhead entryway, marked by the Park Service with a large sign, map, and several instructive warnings (Figure 1). At this point near the Meyers Beach parking lot, institutional markers abound, guiding visitor understanding



Figure 1: A stack of walking sticks left behind by individual visitors leans against the National Park Service sign at the Meyers Beach entrance to the Lakeshore Trail, June, 2013.

of the location. There are any number of readable objects, telling visitors what this “place” is supposed to be. There is a gravel trail with linear 2-by-4’s directing visitor movement and attention, and a nicely mowed section of grass, letting visitors know that this is the *limen*, this is the official border between civilization and nature, as if to materially mark the site by saying, “Beyond this point lies *wilderness*.” But there is also something nonofficial and non-institutional at play that jumped out immediately to me as an example of folk practice and folk culture.

It was a pile of walking sticks, discarded and leaning in a makeshift stack alongside the official sign. It was a textbook example of what we mean when we describe everyday modes of practice that are not institutionalized nor formally learned but which people pick up and perpetuate all the same. When I arrived at the trailhead that morning, I noted five walking sticks, leaning against the official trailhead map sign, left behind, it seemed, for others to take up before embarking into the woods. When I returned from the trail, hours later, just before sunset, there were four more sticks in the pile, making a total of nine. These sticks were not mentioned on the sign and their haphazard arrangement was not sanctioned by the Park Service. They were rather left by the people who passed through the trailhead, aggregating folk culture in absence

of a physically contemporaneous community.

Now, we could talk about the material aspects of the sticks themselves as folklore—and this has been done, by F.S. Burnell (1948) back in the 1940s, or in passing by any number of writers, like Zora Neale Hurston (1935) or Paul Bohannon (1961)—but I was interested in how this bit of folkloric practice contributed to the experience and sense of place. Here, I realized that even in the “wilderness,” even in this supposedly remote location, folklore is constructing place and place is constructing folklore. I saw, illustrated in this moment, that folklore and place are in a relationship of constant and mutual re-formation. In something as simple as a pile of walking sticks growing in number throughout the day, I recognized how collective or cooperative actions taken in or at a specific location can guide, promote, or constrain subsequent avenues for action and expression. I may not have seen the other hikers in the woods that day, but their presence and the traces they left behind influenced my experience. First, by seeing the sticks upon my arrival, I was reminded that this so-called “remote” trailhead was not entirely free from other human visitors, and that I would potentially find others walking in those woods. At the same time, the placement of the sticks contributed to the sense that this trailhead location—this particular *place*—was distinct as a stopping point or transition point, between nature and civilization. The collective placement of the sticks at this spot echoed the suggestions of the sign and curated trailhead landscape, implying that beyond this point, in one direction, the walking stick tool might be needed, while beyond this point in the other, it would not be as useful and could be left behind. A distinction in spatial perception was implied. And, of course, the actions of others in this physical spot encouraged me and any other visitors that day to take similar actions, either grabbing a walking stick before setting off into the forest or leaving our own behind upon our “return to the civilized world.”

I say this was my “a-ha” moment because with this in mind I began to see the traces of wilderness visitors everywhere I looked, even in the densest areas of the forest, miles beyond the trailhead itself. And it was here that I hit upon my core argument for this essay: the choices made by people in any location, collected over time, resonate and aggregate, constraining, encouraging, and otherwise guiding the subsequent choices of others in that spot, and this collection of choices over time, even in absence of any physically contemporaneous community, contributes to what Barbara Allen (1990), Elaine Lawless (2011), and Kent Ryden (1993) have all called a “sense of place.”

A “sense of place,” Allen explains, is not only “a consciousness of one’s physical surroundings” but also “a fundamental human experience” that “seems to be especially strong where people in a neighborhood, a community, a region, possess a collective awareness of place and express it in their cultural forms” (1990, 1). It is the collectively shared concept of an area or landscape constituted through individual experiences. At the same time that “one space” can act as “many places” for many groups and individuals (Hufford 1992), we can also trace how “many places” simultaneously act as “one space,” or how plural experiences in one location come to compound as a single, referential and symbolic location.

Carving a Trail for Action: Rethinking Strategies and Tactics

The wilderness trail is both a good case example and a good metaphor for this idea. The footsteps of hikers, repeated over time, literally carve and wear out a trail for action where there was no trail before, a trail that others are then, by its mere presence, inclined to also follow. This illustrates literally how the patterns in movement through the wooded space develop *and* figuratively how any patterns of movement are haunted and guided by the trace of other movements before them. The shared experience of movement through a particular physical environment—of following this rise in slope rather than that one, of rounding behind the fallen tree instead of beneath it, of steadying one's steps with a walking stick instead of slogging along without one—leads to a shared experience of the environment, a shared sense of place, and this shared experience leads, as Gregory Clark (2004) has noted, to shared culture. Walkers on any given trail, whether in the Gaylord Nelson Wilderness or just between buildings on campus, for example, are not independent nodes of completely original spatial experience but rather, through their combined and repeated actions, I argue, they are spontaneous diachronic communities of shared practice in a specific location. This notion pushes us toward a phenomenological approach to folklore, and the idea that our experience of the world—including our experience of place—is filtered always through the frame of custom, culture, and vernacular practice. Our shared aesthetic, exchanged, adopted, and adapted not through official channels but through everyday actions, often without explicit reflection, provides foundation for a common sense (or *doxa*), predisposing us to make some choices over others, to see some aspects of our physical environment and overlook alternatives.

In the early 1980s, Michel de Certeau illuminated this interplay between macro-level custom and individual experience by discussing the “strategies” and “tactics” for spatial engagement and action. Using the example of the walker in the modern cityscape rather than the hiker in the wooded wilderness, he explained that strategies, on the one hand, provided prescribed bounds for action within an environment, while tactics, on the other hand, were resistive, independent movements taken and lived by the individual.

These are valuable concepts, but in spite of de Certeau's own writing, they can sometimes lead to a kind of either-or method of thinking about actions and culture; that is, in distinguishing between the community's guided “strategies” and the individual's innovative “tactics,” we frequently run the risk of promoting a false dualism between the two. In practice—and de Certeau does point this out—the two often overlap. In folklore and folk practice, though, we can all see a category between pure strategies and pure tactics, where choices and actions are both culturally guided *and* spontaneously innovative.

De Certeau described the practices of everyday life as a constant negotiation between his two abstract poles, noting that all daily activities are developed through some degree of strategic constraint and tactical invention. Strategies are the rules of system and law, never fully visible to the individual inside the system but constantly influencing perceptions and encouraging certain modes and avenues for action.

Tactics are the in-the-moment, on-the-ground choices of the individual in the system. De Certeau referred to the actualization of spatial possibilities through individual acts of movement as “enunciation.” Of course, de Certeau envisioned this push and pull within the modern cityscape, not the supposedly unmediated expanse of a national wilderness. In de Certeau’s cityscape, tactics are exemplified by the individual who takes a shortcut through an alleyway or outside of a sanctioned crosswalk, curving against the structured grid. Yet in this respect the social trail running through a park or preserve is analogous to de Certeau’s tactical city shortcut, simply without the *explicitly* or hyperbolically ordered structure imposed by omnipresent signs, sidewalks, and urban design. A trail walker and a city walker are both enunciating their environments. Analyzing the push and pull along a wooded or desert trail disrupts de Certeau’s initial conception of the tension but in the park or preserve strategies and tactics are still always simultaneously at play.

In fact, it is hard to envision a nature trail without some combination of prescription and individual action in perpetual tension, especially in explicitly maintained National Parks and other nature preserves. Along the outdoor nature trail, there are frequently no signs or rules, no official strategic instructions for how to move or in which direction. Any individual walking through the woods has, from a tactical perspective, the choice of making any one of an infinite number of movements. And yet, the vast majority of hikers will follow the worn trail, formed by the footsteps of those who came before them. They might make this choice because it is physically easier than walking through the flora. They might stay on the trail because they feel they are “supposed to” or that there must be some non-explicit law at play. They may even pass through without consciously reflecting on their movement at all. Yet in each case, the individual experience of place is contingent upon the movements already taken in that place by others, and the end experience of the place ends up echoing the experience of those others who moved through it in a similar way.

In this performance of precedent, folkloristics and practice theory become one. Both are concerned with how individual performances perpetuate, adopt, and adapt traditional forms. And this focus also leads to the real meat of any folkloristic analysis of place: the recognition that when an individual is situated in a location, that location is simultaneously situated through the interpretive frames of the individual, simultaneously put in traceable relationship to a web of other places and meanings. Places and landscapes invite visitors to assume particular subject positions (Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki 2006, 30) and, in enacting those positions, individual visitors promote their inherent viewpoints as *doxa*, as “common sense” (Schein 2003, 217). As Timothy Cresswell writes, place is “produced by practice that adheres to (ideological) beliefs about what is the appropriate thing to do” but place also “reproduces the beliefs that produce it in a way that makes them appear natural, self-evident, and common sense. [. . .] Thus places are active forces in the reproduction of norms in the definition of appropriate practice. Place constitutes our ideas about what is appropriate as much as it is constituted by them” (Cresswell 1996, 16).

Humanist geographers and theorists, like J.B. Jackson (1984), Edward Relph (1985), Anne Buttner (1985), and Edward Casey (1993) have recognized this mutual and

ever-cycling relationship between sense of place and experience in place. The idea and impression we have of a location tends to guide our actions in that location, and those actions lead to experiences which affirm or challenge previous understandings, leading to a new sense of place that in turn guides other actions in the future. One always already informs the other, and the cycling relationship never ends.

Case Example: The Apostle Islands National Lakeshore

Thus, looking again at the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, I began to document any and all ways in which the actions taken by others guide, encourage, and constrain actions taken by the individual. After reflecting on these findings, I can identify at least four ways in which the action of situated self in and through a place is a moment of folk transmission and cultural influence on choice and perception.

Social Guides for Sense of Place in Relatively Unpeopled Locations	
Face-to-face social interaction	The observed behaviors of others, even if brief, provide a model for visitor practice in the space.
Narratives of place and other “intertexts”	Popular stories about, images of, and associations with place provide expectation and frame for practice even well after they are first told or encountered.
Trace of others that guides subsequent visitors’ interpretations	The physical trace of how others have behaved in the place before a visitor arrives become interpretable elements of the environment.
Trace of others that guides subsequent visitors’ movement and actions	The physical trace of how others have behaved in the place before a visitor arrives provide a model and invitation to action for those subsequent visitors, whether adopting, adapting, or rejecting existing paths.

Table 1: In places devoid of contemporaneous social community, social precedent and practice still guide interpretation and action in at least four traceable ways.

First, we have those moments in which experience in place is guided by actual, direct, face-to-face social interaction. While people on the trails in early summer were few and far between, they were not completely absent. Over several months, I documented what happened when two or more parties encountered one another in the wilderness or natural trail space. Here, almost invariably, there seems to be an unspoken code of conduct. Upon crossing paths in the woods, hikers nod briefly to one another, exchange one or two quick salutations of acknowledgement, then continue on their way. In over a hundred observed occasions, hikers avoided stopping or breaking their stride, infringing on the other’s trail experience as little as possible. The one notable exception was when hikers met at a slope or bottleneck and the hiker moving upslope stopped briefly to allow the downslope hiker ease of passage. In cases when small groups encountered one another on the trail, both hushed their conversation and entered into a brief silence when passing the other. None of these behaviors, to my knowledge, are

taught officially on any trail, but across Northern Wisconsin I observed them time and time again. My informants confirmed that such conduct is more or less understood as proper hikers' code, much like the practices documented by communication scholar Samantha Senda-Cook (2012; 2013). In these cases, glancing face-to-face interaction encouraged a sense of park or preserve as a space of quiet reverence and removal from human activity. These brief, hushed interactions, performed while consistently moving forward through the environment encourage a common sense of place as one for temporary, careful, reverent recreation.

Second, I documented moments in which experience in place is guided by narratives and other cultural intertexts that guide individual interpretations. These are the stories about woods and wilderness that predispose people to experience those forests in particular ways. I have written on this phenomenon elsewhere—on how legends of wolves and bears and other threatening creatures make the forest seem foreboding, or how association with pop culture referents like Tolkien's Elven forests or, perhaps, the forest moon of Endor can encourage a sense of magic and adventure in even the most urban of wooded landscapes—but narrative intertexts can also take the form of family lore or personal experience narratives (Schmitt 2013). Many of my informants in the Apostle Islands explained that they associate specific locations with memories from their childhood and that they revisit these places to re-capture experiences they or their relatives have had before.

Third, we might look at how the mere trace of others left behind guides our subsequent interpretation and sense of any given place. Think, for instance, of rubbish on the trail, like soda cans or granola bar wrappers. These traces of past human interaction in a nature place elicit reactions in those who subsequently enter the same area—in some cases, perhaps, an urge to double one's own ecological efforts and, in others, perhaps, a justification for littering oneself. These traces of others that guide interpretation also included graffiti along the trail, like the words "It's Been a Hell of an Adventure" scrawled along a Park Service sign. Here the interplay between de Certeau's official strategies and rebellious tactics took material form, and the subsequent visitors to a location where initials had been carved or other graffiti left behind encountered something different than the pristine, natural landscape that they might have sought in concept. The trace of other human actions altered the objects and environments available for interpretation. Simply put, the trace left by previous visitors changes the environment and interpretive experience open to subsequent visitors.

And finally, I noted those instances in which the trace of others' actions not only guided interpretation but encouraged subsequent action. These are exemplified by the social trails running through areas relatively sparse of human modifiers, signifiers, and symbols. Even in the physical absence of others, the trace of human actions encourages the hiking community's repetition of those actions. The official strategy for action is defined by the Park Service trail, carved into the land. But prompted by some individual desire or obstacle, some hiker may tactically carve a new trail, walking around, for instance, a muddy or flooded area (Figure 2). A second hiker may



Figure 2: A social trail diverts from the Park Service path at a particularly muddy spot along the Lakeshore Trail, June 2013.

follow suit and, whereas there is rarely evidence for hikers breaking the official trail's strategic path for movement in other locations, in this instance, when the strategic trail leads through muck and mire, several hikers may eventually opt to take the non-official, tactical route. In fact, in some locations, so many other hikers have done so that the new, non-official path can rival the original in size. De Certeau's tactics and strategies are blurred here, as the individual hikers making individual choices over time have in fact made the same choice, influenced and spurred by the trace of the community's action.

This happens quite frequently along the trail spaces I have studied. Recognizing that others have taken a path is often enough for hikers to take the path themselves, even when it is non-official. Social trails are not the only available routes through the environment, but they are repeated and the repetition aggregates.

When an officially maintained Park Service trail-blazes forward and a ragged, smaller, foot-worn social trail veers uphill and away from the formal path, strategies and tactics are both physically imprinted on the land, materialized and manifested. This material manifestation, this record of movement, adds new complexity to de Certeau's initial cityscape model, as it shows that the physical trace of previous tactical

movements can function as future strategies, guiding and constraining the subsequent tactical movements of others. In a place where both official and non-official avenues for action are physically marked upon the land, it becomes especially clear that strategies and tactics are in constant interplay, mutually guiding and constraining subsequent actions and indeed *combining* to produce an ultimate interpretation of place.

In the AINL, as in most national park spaces, the social trails take many forms. On the AINL's Stockton Island, for instance, a line of foot-worn dirt splits from the mapped Park Service trail and curves beneath the aboveground roots of a massive tree, suggesting that trail walkers have passed and may still pass through an opening in the roots as if it were a doorway. Farther along the same trail in 2013, a line of footsteps veered sharply to the side to avoid a fallen pine that prevented easy passage along the sanctioned path. On the mainland, at a creek bed crossing of the Lakeshore Trail, several material elements—like three separate lines of rocks placed like stepping stones across the stream and a fallen log spanning the creek with its topside worn barkless and smooth by footsteps—suggested that visitors tactically split in various directions when passing by the obstacle. And everywhere in the Lakeshore expanse, countless social trails split off to allow walker access to beaches, rock outcroppings, and bluffs. None of these avenues for movement are designed or marked or even encouraged by the Park Service but they are manifested and maintained by individual visitor movements all the same.

This materialized trace of separate individuals moving through the AINL at different times makes the push and pull between strategies and tactics manifest on the landscape itself. As more and more trail walkers make individual choices over time, their visible, tactical enunciations become strategic in their own right. In the physical imprint of the social trail through the flora or on the land, the repeated tactical choices of multiple independent individuals over time are documented and, through repetition (contributing to the social trail's visibility and size), they become a kind of alternative "strategy" or folk "tactic," running away from the official Park Service trails but setting a strategic line for movement for others who then follow along the alternative route.

Thus, ultimately, on any trail the individual trail walker enunciates the trailspace by moving individually between the official and non-official avenues, sometimes sticking to the Park Service trail at a regular pace, sometimes slowing to view or hear part of the environment, sometimes speeding up, sometimes doubling back to re-trace steps, and sometimes veering off the official trail entirely to follow a social trail to a particular peak or landmark.

All of this relates to practice theory in that the individual action of walking along a nature trail encourages, over time, a common sense of moving through the location. As Senda-Cook argues, in hiking by the rules, hikers "rhetorically construct norms, values, and identities that seem natural and authentic" (2012, 138). In bending or breaking the rules by following the footsteps of others, hikers create an alternative set of norms and values, but not wholly independent improvisations. Walking the paths that others have walked creates merely a counterpublic or alternative social

path. As Scheiffelin (1985) notes, such performance constructs symbolic reality not by “presenting an argument, description, or commentary” but “by socially constructing a situation in which the participants experience symbolic meanings as part of the process of what they are already doing” (709).

This matters because although walking along a desire path or social trail may seem, at first, rebellious or resistant, it can also be likewise a constraint to environmental perceptions, frequently perpetuating the same nature-culture divide that Cronon and other contemporary ecologists are fighting to dispel. This constraint is easily traceable in official paths and guides to movement, the “strategic” trails, in de Certeau’s sense. The words and images surrounding the standard trailhead in the AINL, for instance, are designed to promote both visitor and environment wellbeing, but they are heavily prescriptive, with directions and rules and regulations posted at every corner. The signs, trails, and other human efforts—sometimes as simple as mowing grass in some areas and letting it grow freely in others—are explicitly crafted to direct the visitor’s gaze, to prompt reflection on some aspects of the environment while overlooking others. In accordance with the U.S. Wilderness Act and National Park Service (NPS) wilderness management plans, the AINL is simultaneously a place for preservation of biophysical environments and public enjoyment/appreciation; the crafted experiential landscape, thus, is one of aesthetic appreciation from a respectful distance, of nature as spectacle object, viewed and revered but not engaged directly or for extended periods of time. However, official guides for movement in and through the space are by no means the only factor in determining that movement, and even on the unofficial paths a similar sense of place is encouraged. While it is no surprise to find that official NPS guides encourage interpretations and actions consistent with NPS goals, attention to material rhetorics of social trails demonstrates that individual hikers on the trail are complicit in the perpetuation of nature place as object of both careful reverence and aesthetic enjoyment.

That is, while they may appear to buck authority and challenge the system of NPS order, the vast majority of AINL social trails merely hug the official trail, never diverging more than a few dozen yards and, then, often only doing so to allow the walker to 1) avoid a temporary hazard in the existing official trail, like a fallen tree; 2) avoid disturbing some biophysical aspect of the official trail, like wildlife grazing alongside the path; or 3) access a particularly notable promontory or viewing location, almost exclusively along the bluffs and shorelines facing the expanse of Lake Superior. In these cases, the social trails do not radically depart from the NPS mission of simultaneous preservation and appreciation but rather extend and actualize it. Those trail walkers who stick along the official trail will enact and enunciate the removed yet appreciative gaze. They are simultaneously invited to compare their own movements to the implied others who have left the official path for the social trail and to recognize their own, obedient movements as less invasive. Those trail walkers who pass onto the social trail, however, are also invited to engage with the place at a spectatorial distance, as the material layout of the trail still invites the walker to disrupt as little as possible, view the nature place as fragile yet valuable object for viewing, and, when

occasionally invasive and departing from the prescribed ecological action, to do so primarily in pursuit of grander vistas, for wider views and more spectacular sights.

This is the case for the social trail on Stockton Island, weaving through the root-work doorframe, as it invites walkers to literally pass through remarkable aspects of the environment without touching or disturbing them. It is the case by the trail around the fallen pine, where the prescribed path is only amended to avoid disrupting the pine directly while still allowing the walker to pass. It is the case at the creek bed crossing, where an obstacle in the nature space is indeed disrupted (by placing stones and logs for crossing) but in the name of allowing trail walker passing and viewership of the spaces beyond. It is certainly the case for those countless social trails leading to bluffs and beaches, providing vista views of Lake Superior. Hundreds of social trails in the AINL point toward the shoreline, where the tree cover thins and affords trail walkers a greater vista view. Even when leaving the official path, a model of environment as spectacle object—meant to be seen and appreciated from a reverent remove but rarely disturbed or directly engaged—is encouraged.

When the representative avenues for officially sanctioned movement and individually inventive movement both encourage a similar mode of understanding the nature place, that understanding is powerfully reinforced and normalized. Social trails in the AINL do diverge from NPS paths, but rarely if ever with complete disregard for the official directives of NPS maintenance. When even the resistive visitor is inclined to take a social trail as an act of enunciation, very few AINL visitors are likely to interpret or experience the wilderness outside of the spectacle object frame. This is how folk culture spreads, but it also ensures a sense of common experience—a common sense of place and action in that place—for people who may never encounter one another face-to-face or online or communicate in any form beyond their shared tactical actions.

Conclusion

The uniquely visible case example of the nature park social trail provides a material model for understanding how the actions of others leave precedent for subsequent actors, and how individual adoption and adaptation of such precedented practice becomes normative, marked more and more clearly as the common sense means of passing through a space. It gives us a new outlook for considering the relationship between folklore and place. The four ways in which the individual's action in a place is a moment of folk transmission and cultural influence listed above extend beyond the wilderness hiking trail and into any other terrestrial environment. We ought always to remember that strategies and tactics are not dualistic opposites but rather modes of action that often if not always interact. We should embrace the idea of folk tactics—the collective and cooperative pattern of individual, tactical choices—as a key element in defining place and space. Attention to the official and unofficial (or, even, counter-official) elements of the material landscape builds upon de Certeau's initial concepts by making physical movement and the physical trace of movement available and accessible to cultural analysis.

Returning to the trailhead at Meyers Beach this past year, I again encountered a stack of walking sticks. This time there were seven sticks, on the ground beside the path instead of leaning against the trail sign. The place itself had changed, ever so slightly—as, in fact, every place always does. Like Dorren Massey (2005) points out, one can never experience the same place multiple times, as the seasons shift and the context of each visit differs slightly, but the repetition of choices makes the general sense of place for each visit and each visitor potentially similar and familiar. This may account, in part, for why my informants in more formal interviews, though never having met, attest to having such similar interpretations of wilderness and natural places, and having had such similar experiences when they got there. They are literally following in each other's footsteps while laying footsteps of their own. The practice ensures that the place is there for others to find and follow.

Just as in more explicitly structured environments, like museums, memorials, and cityscapes, parks, preserves, and national wilderness are likewise framed by human understandings, likewise constrain movement and direct attention, and likewise thus invite subject positions for visitors and viewers. As Zagacki and Gallagher suggest, parks and preserves are “spaces of attention” wherein “visitors are invited to experience the landscape around them as a series of enactments” that create “innovative opportunities for individuals to attend to the human/nature interface” (2009, 171).

Popular frames for “nature,” ecology, and preservation—whether textual, visual, material, or otherwise—may at first seem innocuous or altruistic, directed at protecting the biophysical environment from harm, yet the very efforts toward environmental respect and sustainability that guide public understandings of so-called nature places and human relationship with them can likewise constrain them. Governing bodies like the NPS or any agency managing the physical and discursive layout of a biophysical place are in effect managing the social life within in it. The park or preserve becomes what McKerrow (1999) terms a “regulatory space” in which the discursive formations of the governing body authorizing actions within it are “seen as mainstream, appropriate, and hence unobjectionable; in this context, the people are complicit in the very structures that serve to regulate their lives” (278).

Attention to trailways as *doxa* materialized helps to deconstruct the tacit assumptions guiding and constraining movement over populations and time. Applying folkloristic study and practice theory to the environmental and geographic subject will help to illuminate, target, and alter or eliminate frames that hinder ecological well-being and sustainability while promoting a relationship between humans and biophysical surroundings that does not rely upon implicit assumptions like those encouraged by trails that lead to visions of nature as a spectacle object.

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Reasonable Suspicion: Folklore, Practice, and the Reproduction of Institutions

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Abstract

First developed in the 1970s, practice theory is a body of social thought that seeks to understand the relationship between the agency of individual actors and large-scale social formations. This article draws on ideas from the practice tradition and contemporary research in folklore studies to explore one facet of the structure/agency issue—the role of folklore in the reproduction of institutions. Offering a close reading of policy and procedure documents associated with “reasonable suspicion training” (an instructional program given to administrators in large organizations to direct them in the proper handling of incidents of workplace intoxication), the article illuminates one of the key means by which authority is both exercised and obscured in contemporary institutions. The article argues for the centrality of folklore scholarship in the study of institutional orders and identifies key reciprocities between, on the one hand, practice theory, and, on the other, occupational folklore, laborlore, and organizational folklore.

In a wide range of disciplines across the humanities and social sciences, practice theory has become one of the dominant traditions of contemporary social thought. Emerging in the 1970s and 1980s from founding writings by Anthony Giddens ([1976] 1993, 1979, 1984), Pierre Bourdieu ([1972] 1977), and Michel de Certeau ([1980] 1984), the tradition has been developed by scholars in anthropology (e.g., Ortner 1997, 2006), education (Wenger 1998), and sociology itself (e.g., Schatzki, Cetina, and von Savigny, 2001), and it has had a significant impact on folklore studies and the cluster of disciplines closely connected to it. In a recent article, Simon Bronner has documented the rise of practice theory in European ethnology and folklore and offered significant insights about the relationship between performance theory in North American folklore studies and the related but distinct use of the notion of practice in the European context (2012, see also Margry and Roodenburg 2012). Bourdieu’s ideas about culture and power (1986) have been enormously influential on popular music studies, where scholars like Keith Kahn-Harris (2006, 2010) have extended his notion of cultural capital to understand the politics of prestige in music subcultures and the complex ways in which subcultural dynamics are shaped by the large-scale social contexts in which they are embedded. A wide range of ethnomusicologists have engaged with practice theory as well, using it to speak to fundamental dynamics in the politics of culture (Mahon 2014, 8), the relationship between musical experience and the dispositions that structure everyday life (Olsen 2014), and the cultural politics of nationalism (Askew 2002). The ideas of Giddens and Bourdieu have been central to our thinking from our

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very earliest research (Berger 1997, [1999] 2004; Del Negro and Berger 2001), and we have used them to examine the interplay of culture and agency in music perception (1999), analyze keywords such as identity, reflexivity, and everyday life (Berger and Del Negro 2004), and explore the politics of music and other forms of expressive culture (2009).¹

Comparing practice theory in European ethnology and performance theory in American folkloristics, Bronner observes that both intellectual traditions share a common emphasis on agency, situated conduct, and the doing of folklore. But Bronner's primary concern is with the differences between the traditions and the ways in which American performance theory has focused scholarly attention on highly framed, aestheticized behavior, rather than on quotidian or instrumental conduct. In this context, Bronner argues, European folklore and ethnology have used practice theory to provide a firmer foundation for folklife studies and opened up significant new arenas for research on everyday life. The point is not without its nuances. While Richard Bauman's seminal formulation of performance theory, *Verbal Art as Performance* ([1977] 1984), expends a substantial amount of attention on the semiotic mechanisms by which stretches of discourse are framed as displays of communicative competence, Bauman also emphasizes that the aesthetic valence of the performance frame can be freighted with varying amounts of intensity. In cultural performances such as rites of passage, verbal art can be sharply set apart from everyday life and highly aestheticized, but the quotidian realm, Bauman argues, is shot through with verbal behavior that is only lightly aestheticized. In everyday life, actors may lightly frame their talk as performance, and their Jakobsonian poetics may be subordinated to the phatic function of language or the achievement of some other kind of social business. Likewise, Roger Abrahams's theory of enactments (1977) treats performance as only one mode through which folklore may be achieved, and he places great emphasis on the dialectical interplay between "everyday life and ... heightened occasions" (81). These subtleties aside, Bronner is certainly correct that American performance folkloristics has tended to focus attention on phenomena that are in some way heightened, while practice theory has offered European scholars a distinctive set of tools for examining those realms of everyday life whose aesthetic dimensions may be vanishingly small or nonexistent.

One part of Bronner's discussion of practice theory productively explores Bourdieu's notions of *doxa* and *habitus*, as well as the complex ways in which everyday behavior is suffused with culturally specific dispositions. To our reading, Bronner's treatment of Bourdieu's *habitus* has an almost Geertzian quality: by interpreting the embodied practices of everyday life, the scholar has the opportunity to gain deep insights into the social world in which it is situated. There is no question that the foundational writings of practice theory are amenable to this reading, but for both Bourdieu and Giddens, the notion of practice is more frequently used to serve a different purpose. From *Outline of a Theory of Practice* to *Central Problems in Social Theory*, Bourdieu and Giddens most frequently employed the notion of practice to understand the relationship between structure and agency and to address the question of reproduction—the

ways in which everyday acts of situated agents produce and reproduce society, social formations, or particular forms of social order. This issue is a perennial concern for social theory, and even Giddens's monumental *Constitution of Society* does not pretend to offer a final and comprehensive analysis of this topic. Our focus in this essay is on just one facet of this complex and challenging issue—the reproduction of institutions. Set in the broadest context, we seek to show how research on occupational folklore, laborlore, and the folklore of organizations can benefit from ideas from practice theory, and, of equal importance, how the valuable work that folklorists have done in this area can be made to speak to the wider scholarly discourse on social reproduction.

The essay develops its argument in four sections. After this introduction, the first section opens our analysis by sketching out the problem of social reproduction and exploring our everyday experience of, and common intuitions about, structure and agency. The section continues by discussing key ideas from Giddens and Bourdieu regarding the ways that the actions of agents constitute social structure. In the second section, we narrow our focus to examine the reproduction of institutions and suggest the crucial role that the legal notion of “reasonableness” plays in the exercise and legitimation of institutional power. To gain purchase in this rugged terrain, the third section shifts away from abstract, theoretical work and presents a close reading of documents associated with “reasonable suspicion training” (henceforth RST).

RST is an instructional program given to administrators in universities and other organizations to prepare them to deal with employees suspected of workplace intoxication. More than just a single course, reasonable suspicion training is part of a larger complex of institutional forms designed to manage the legal risks that workplace intoxication entails. It's a fascinating phenomenon in its own right, but our goal in this section is not simply to present, for its own sake, a close reading of a set of institutional texts. Rather, we analyze the convoluted logic of RST in order to reveal broader dynamics of power and legitimation that are fundamental to modern organizations and to gain new ways of thinking about institutional reproduction and the folklore of the workplace. Building on ideas from Giddens and Bourdieu and the social insights of anthropologist F.W. Bailey (1983), our analysis of reasonable suspicion training reveals a form of legerdemain at the heart of modern institutions, a trick of circular reasoning by which organizational administration obscures its own exercise of power. RST, we argue, justifies itself by reference to commonly held standards of reasonable people in the community; not content to be grounded on such intuitions, however, RST actually regiment the intuitions that it claims to be based on. By showing how institutions regiment the everyday practices that they claim to be grounded upon, this third section throws the problem of institutional reproduction into sharp relief. The fourth and final section of the essay uses ideas from practice theory to reinterpret central ideas from occupational folklore, laborlore, and the folklore of organizations. Here, we illustrate the critical place that folklore holds in the reproduction of institutions and the centrality of folklore studies for any scholar interested in understanding the ways that everyday conduct reproduces social life.

Practice theory and the problem of social reproduction

Understanding the relationship between structure and agency has been at the heart of practice theory since its inception. In *Central Problems of Social Theory* (1979), for example, Giddens explores a broad range of topics in social philosophy—the relationship between action and intention, the nature of the subject, the role of ideology in social life—but at each turn, he circles back to what he sees as a “duality of structure” by which structure and agency co-constitute one another. For Giddens, this duality involves a relation of intimacy that goes beyond the dialectical or simple spatial metaphors: it cannot be characterized by a push and pull of mutually opposing forces and is more closely coordinated than the X and Y axes of a two dimensional graph. Describing this duality, Giddens writes that “structure is both the medium and the outcome of the reproduction of practices” (pg. 5). Giddens allows that in any given empirical case study, the researcher may bracket out large-scale structural or institutional contexts and study the strategic conduct of agents, or, alternatively, place an *epoché* around situated practices and study the structural dynamics of institutions. However, for him, these are strictly “methodological” moves. To Giddens, the fundamental reality of social life is practice, the situated conduct of agents, which unavoidably involves both structure and agency at every turn. In characteristically difficult language, Bourdieu develops related ideas, arguing that practice is produced by “structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively ‘regulated’ and ‘regular.’” Yet, Bourdieu immediately continues that this regularity cannot be understood as “the product of obedience to rules” and that while practice is “collectively orchestrated” it is not the “product of the orchestrating action of a conductor” ([1972] 1977, 72). Instead, practice is both the fluid, agentive product of agents and the means by which social order is reproduced.

Whether we take as our starting point the complex social logic Giddensian duality or the twisted language that explains Bourdieuvian habitus, it is clear that practice theory seeks to offer a fundamental reconceptualization of the notions of structure and agency. One way to gain entry into these new ideas is to take stock of our everyday intuitions about these topics. Agency appears to be about people doing things, structure points to societies and institutions, and a solid footing of common sense seems to underlie these common concepts. For example, while some spiritual traditions may advocate quietism or determinism, most people find it hard to conceptualize everyday conduct in a way that completely erases agency. I buy a gift for a friend’s birthday, sign a form to register for a class, or argue with a police officer about a parking ticket. Psychologists, sociologists, and philosophers can argue indefinitely about subconscious motives, structural constraints, or first causes, but in quotidian behavior, I feel myself to be the initiator of my actions. No matter how powerful psychodynamic, structural, or philosophical arguments may be in undermining the intellectual basis for the notion of self or will, my everyday talk and everyday experience of everyday conduct understands it as my own conduct, something that I have brought into the world, something that came about because of my agency. Likewise, everyday talk typically

understands social structure in general and institutions in particular as things, in and of themselves. We speak of a company hiring a new employee or giving a raise, a letter being lost by the postal service, or an (agentless) change in university policy. Individuals are “beaten down by the system” or as “work within the system”; we try to learn “how the system works,” as if an organization was a mechanism, not a group of people, and we routinely distinguish between an institution and the actors within it. In one of the earliest articulations of office folklore, Alan Dundes and Carl R. Pagter based their discussion of the meaning of photocopy lore in the language of our mundane reification of structure: urbanites, they write, are defined by “the unhappy experiences in battling ‘the system,’ whether that system be the machinery of government or the maze where one works” (1975, xix).

Of course, our lay materialism knows that it is always people, not institutions, that perform concrete actions (hiring an employee or providing a raise), but our lay sociological imagination knows that they can only do so when wearing an institutional hat. It is not Jane Doe herself who gives me the raise, it is Jane in her capacity as my supervisor who does so. What authorizes her to do this is the institution, which seems to have an existence beyond the individuals who at this moment hold this or that post. Now if a nuclear bomb were to go off today on the campus of our university, it’s clearly the case that, in some important sense, the institution would cease to exist. Following out this intuition, we might say that, obviously, organizations depend on the material reality of a specific group of actors. Yet individual faculty, staff, and students are continuously being hired and fired, enrolled or expelled, and this does not cause us to question the existence of the institution.² Indeed, institutions are clearly something more than an aggregate of individuals, and we routinely talk about them as abstract structures, sets of roles, or systems of empty placeholders that individuals temporarily inhabit—entities that take on “lives of their own.” These terms are as intuitive and seemingly unproblematic as they are fundamentally opposed to the lay materialism that tells us that I can’t file my parking request if the parking clerk is out sick today, that knows that I can’t receive a diploma from Greendale Community College (the fictional school featured in *Community*, a recent television show from the United States) because the comical Dean Pelton, the uncaring Professor Duncan, and their colleagues don’t exist to give it to me. Indeed the more we think about structure and agency, the more we see that our everyday talk about institutions is deeply muddled, attributing agency to both individuals and institutions without any clear understanding of what they are or what it might mean for either to initiate an action. This confusion leads to fuzzy thinking about power relations, their legitimation, and the reproduction of society. Problems regarding structure and agency such as these are precisely the ones that practice theorists have sought to resolve.

On the most basic level, the classical statements of practice theory acknowledge that structure is constituted by the practices of its agents, and, in this sense, practice theory is a kind of materialism—not in the sense in which Marxist political economy is materialist (though Bourdieu’s work and the early writings of Giddens are usually understood as neo-Marxist in their orientation),³ but, in a weaker sense, that they

understand social phenomena as comprised of concrete, embodied actions in the spatio-temporal world, rather than abstractions or ideals. But rejecting any retreat into bourgeois voluntarism, Giddens and Bourdieu recognize that social structure is the site in which power relations are constituted. In this context, the critical problem for social theory to understand is how, if social structures are constituted by the actions of their agents, power relations are maintained over time. What keeps situated conduct from being purely individual, unconstrained, and capricious? What regiments behavior, allows typified relations between actors to be maintained, and social structures to emerge and be reproduced?

The answer is that conduct is never the radically self-initiated, autonomous creation of individuals; it is always situated in social and historical context, always is “both constrained and enabled” by the context of past practices (an oft repeated Giddens construction), and always carried out in anticipation of future ones. The materialist focus on concrete acts of social practice thus problematizes our lay ideas about both structure and agency. In *Central Problems in Social Theory*, for example, Giddens uses a sophisticated critique of action/intention models of social conduct to rethink the notion of agency. In this view, actors do indeed make their actions, but they have incomplete understandings of their own motivations, operate in social contexts that they can never fully understand or acknowledge, employ social resources, norms, and commonplaces that come to them from a pre-existing history, and produce consequences that ripple out beyond their immediate, situated intentions. Likewise, Bourdieu offers trenchant criticisms of the idea of rule following to show how relatively fixed dispositions, which are always implicated in relations of power, play out in extraordinarily flexible, context-sensitive ways. A similar logic is at work in the practice theory analysis of signification. Both authors critique traditional humanistic visions of subjectivity that see the person as able to lift herself outside of discourse or social life to create meaning *ex nihilo*, but they also reject any mechanical determinism in which the guiding hand of structure or discourse controls the actions and experiences of agents. In contrast, they envision a “decentered subject,” one that makes meaning, but always does so within discursive and social contexts, using the tools of discourse to produce and reproduce discourse, having the potential to be an agent within history but never a purely free-willing one.

Thus, while a specific, concrete actor issues a speeding ticket, authorizes a form, or approves a raise, the very terms that make such conduct intelligible emerge from a history of past practices and only have meaning as anticipations of the future practices of others. It is through the complex embedding of present action within the concrete past and the lived anticipation of the future conduct of others that structure is reproduced. This is one dimension of what Giddens called *structuration*. Central to this process is what Bourdieu referred to as *habitus*—taken for granted, embodied dispositions to particular forms of action, a set of regularities that are shaped by power and reproduce the social order but which, in situated context, are remarkable in their improvisatory, flexible character.⁴ Understood in this way, practice both produces and is produced by structure; it both produces and is the product of agents. It is the primary material real-

ity from which the fictions of the purely self-willing subject and reified, autonomous social structure are abstractions.

The reproduction of institutions and the notion of reasonableness

Of course, this reorientation of the notions of structure and agency in terms of practice is only a starting place. The work of Giddens and Bourdieu speaks to a wide range of issues in social analysis, and significant among these is the nature of institutions in modern societies—companies, schools, state bureaucracies, NGOs and other organizations. Shaped by enlightenment notions of rationality, our everyday intuition tell us that institutions are established through documents such as mission statements, by-laws, and compendia of policies and procedures—in short, texts. In contrast, practice theory holds that such documents never fully regiment behavior. Their implementation implies and relies upon the tacit knowledge of habitus. Going further, Giddens suggests that the hallmark of modern institutions is a high level of structural reflexivity; here, monitoring practices observe and regiment other practices in the organization, reflexively shaping them and the “system” from which they emerge. Any faculty member who has been required to write an annual report, or any department chair or head who has had to issue an annual review, is familiar with these kinds of reflexive, bureaucratic processes.

Modern institutions do not generally acknowledge the role of taken for granted, embodied knowledge in their constitution; to the contrary, the discourse of these institutions is saturated in the language of the enlightenment. Their authority is legitimated by reference to the fulfillment of human needs, the respect for human rights, and rational administration and management, concepts that are understood as trans-historical. Awash in platitudes, mission statements, collections of policies and procedures, and employee handbooks articulate these goals and methods. Such texts seem straightforward. “Our institution supports values A, B, and C,” a document might say, “and has goals 1, 2, and 3, and our staff enacts procedures Alpha, Beta, and Gamma in furtherance of them.” One difference between our everyday understandings of institutions and a practice theory perspective turns on the relationship between texts and practices. The former takes the text as a foundation that is contingently enacted in practice, and the latter sees practice as fundamental. In addition, the former sees modern institutions as instruments of rationality and sees power relations as a contingent factor of history, one which the evenhanded application of procedure, grounded ultimately in timeless ideals such as human rights, can ameliorate; in contrast, practice theory sees power as an inevitable part of social life, ideas of justice and fairness as inextricably tied to historical context, and rational administration as a phenomenon that often acts as a cover for those inequities.

One particularly striking illustration of this point is the modern legal notion of *reasonableness*. Reasonableness is a standard central to American law that, we would argue, ultimately rests on the phenomenon of habitus. The notion of reasonableness is ubiquitous in US jurisprudence and, as a consequence, it shapes practice in a wide range of social spheres. Staying within the context of the law, we can observe that ju-

ries in criminal trials are asked to judge a defendant guilty or not guilty based on the presence or absence of *reasonable doubt* about the prosecution's case. Police officers in the US must have *reasonable suspicion* to initiate certain kinds of searches, and notions like *reasonable accommodation*, *reasonable fear*, and *reasonable speed* are found in disability law, immigration law, and traffic law, respectively. All of this ultimately rests on the notion of reasonableness, which *West's Encyclopedia of American Law* defines as "Suitable; just; proper; ordinary; fair; usual"—a cluster of concepts that fuses together rationality, judiciousness, and, by reference to the "ordinary" and the "usual," a shared community standard.⁵ In this context, the law defines a *reasonable person* as an imagined individual, who would, if he or she existed, embody all of those qualities.⁶ When the law speaks of "reasonable doubt" or "reasonable suspicion," it is acknowledging that no fully explicit formula can dictate a legal standard, and it is asking an adjudicating agent (an officer, a judge, or a juror) to determine how an ideally fair-minded person in the community would see such a situation. In making judgments about reasonableness, a juror, for example, is doing nothing other than explicating her own intuitions about practice—she is making discursive and explicit the kind of judgment that in everyday life is embedded in pre-reflexive conduct. To use the language of practice theory, she is thematizing her habitus. The legal notion of reasonableness provides rhetorical cover for this highly situated act. The judge, officer, or juror is lead to say, "I am making a judgment," thus taking some responsibility for her decision, "but it isn't my own unique and capricious view. Rather it's a judgment of what someone from the community would feel. And not just any person, but a fair-minded one."

Here, anyone who has studied language cannot help but be reminded of Noam Chomsky's notion of the "ideal speaker-hearer, in a completely homogeneous speech community" (1965, 3) and the problems that have long been associated with it—that cognition and conduct are dependent on situated context, that society is an organization of difference (rather than a collection of similar individuals), and that social life is dynamic and shaped by power relations. In sexual harassment law, American jurisprudence partially acknowledges this issue. In some US states, juries are asked to decide if a "reasonable person" would feel that the conduct of the defendant created a hostile work environment for the complainant. In other states, though, the law recognizes that judgments about workplace climate are made differently by men and women, and jurors are asked if a "reasonable woman" would feel harassed by the complainant's actions.⁷ Recognizing (correctly) that men and women may have differing intuitions on matters of workplace behavior, the reasonable person/reasonable women distinction suggests the deep complexities of the notion of reasonableness and can serve as an entry point for the institutional analysis that we will develop here.

The law is a key context for institutions and their practices. In the US, institutions are, from a legal standpoint, made legitimate by filing documents of incorporation; more importantly, the institutional practices of on-the-ground actors are regimented by their expectations of the actions of lawyers, judges, police, and ultimately, the force that such actors are allowed to exert. Because they can be sued and may themselves bring suits, actors in institutions are drawn within the ambit of the law, and, as a re-

sult, all of their practices are at least potentially shaped by that discourse. In the next section, we will argue that the reasonableness standard is the clearest illustration of the way in which modern institutions rely on the tacit knowledge of practice and its habitus. Where they evoke a reasonable person in society, those acting in legal or institutional settings base their actions on socially and historically situated intuitions. However, in using the term *reasonable*, they obscure those praxial foundations and drape habitus with the mantle of fair-mindedness, thus legitimating their authority. The denial of the situatedness of our intuitions—and, ultimately, of power—is at the heart of contemporary institutions, and the notion of reasonableness is the clearest articulation of this fact.

In the next section, we perform a close reading of a set of institutional policy documents from a large university in the United States in order to shed light on the ways that the exercise of power is legitimated in organizations, thereby highlighting key dynamics of institutional reproduction. Along the way, we will touch on ideas familiar in practice theory and other forms of contemporary social analysis (e.g. that rules can never fully describe the improvisational, situated complexity of situated practice). Our point, however, is *not* to equate institutions with rules and folklore with the application of those rules to situated context, nor is it to associate institutional behavior with the actions of supervisors and folklore with the resistant techniques of their subordinates. Institutions are constituted by supervisors and subordinates together, though never on a level playing field, and there is a folklore of management as well as one of resistance. In the concluding section of this essay, we will suggest the critical role that folklore plays in the reproduction of institutions, but our goal in the next section is more focused. In this next section, we seek to shed light on a subtle but ubiquitous rhetoric of institutional legitimation whereby those institutions regiment the very intuitions that they claim to be based upon. Doing so will make it easier to see the institution as constituted through-and-through by practice—always built up by the situated action of agents but never merely the result of individual caprice; always a structural arrangement of positions without ever transcending the material reality of flesh-and-blood people interacting in the world.

The reasonable suspicion complex

The contradictions of reasonableness are achingly apparent in the bizarre bureaucratic phenomena that we have referred to above as the reasonable suspicion complex. Reasonable suspicion training is at the heart of this complex of practices. Reasonable suspicion training (RST) is given to administrators in academic institutions and other organizations to teach them how to deal with the possibility of intoxication in the workplace. An individual can work for a large organization for many years and not come across RST, but the practice is by no means obscure. A Google search for “reasonable suspicion training” reveals over seven hundred thousand hits, with links to policy documents on the websites of Human Resources (HR) departments in universities, corporations, and NGOs, as well as multiple ad supported links to HR consulting firms that, for a fee, will provide guidance to individuals or organizations in this area.

If an administrator in any large organization has the misfortune of suspecting that one of her subordinates is intoxicated at work, and if she contacts her superior to ask how to deal with this situation, she will likely be sent for reasonable suspicion training. Texas A&M University, where we recently taught, has such a course of instruction, and our discussion of this issue is based on a close reading of its reasonable suspicion training documents and the associated university and university system policies, procedures, and rules.⁸

At first blush, university policies surrounding drug and alcohol use are straightforward. As the RST documents make clear, university employees should not be intoxicated at work; it is the supervisor's responsibility to make sure that her work environment is a safe one, and part of that means ensuring that none of her subordinates are inebriated in the office. However, accusing an employee of intoxication has serious legal ramifications. To even raise the issue of a worker's sobriety is to make a serious step, not to mention asking her to go home, take a drug test, or undergo suspension or termination. To go down that road, one must have a *reasonable suspicion* that the person is intoxicated. From "Reasonable Suspicion Training," to "Employee Interview for Reasonable Suspicion," and "Reasonable Suspicion Testing," the word *reasonable* appears again and again in the policy and procedure documents, often in awkward constructions, echoing through the texts like the ruminations of an obsessive-compulsive fixed on rationality and order, a neurotic Jimmy Stewart transformed by a fear of litigation from an amiable, fair-minded Mr. Smith into an anxious, perseverating version of Elwood P. Dowd (Stewart's character in the film *Harvey*). A set of PowerPoint slides from the training cites University System policies that state that "employees may be asked to submit to a drug/alcohol test if reasonable suspicion exists to indicate that their ability to perform work may be impaired." An "Incident Report Checklist for Reasonable Suspicion Testing" dictates thirty-six indicators of intoxication that one may observe for one's suspicions to be reasonable, including "Smell of alcohol on breath or person," "Speech: Slurred? Confused? Fragmented? Slow? Unusually soft or loud?" "Mood: Belligerent? Moody? Ecstatic?" "More open or nervous than usual?" "Skin Color: Pale? Flushed?" and "Prolonged lunch hour?" A set of "Supervisor Guidelines: [sic] For Reasonable Suspicion Alcohol & Drug Testing" details procedures for managing the process, including "Preparation Steps to Implement Procedure" (eight steps), "Employee Interview For Reasonable Suspicion" (six steps, all but one with multiple parts), "Request for Reasonable Suspicion Testing" (nine steps), "Procedures Following a Reasonable Suspicion Alcohol Test," "Procedures Following a Reasonable Suspicion Drug Test," and even more procedures to employ in the event of positive tests, negative tests, the employee's refusal to undergo a test, further testing at later dates, and, of course, the testing procedures themselves. Six flow charts help the supervisor to select the right procedure at the right time, and the Guidelines also include a variety of forms to be filled out and signed.

The treatment of affect in the RST documents is deeply contradictory. Forceful, emotion-laden exhortations command the supervisor to enact the procedures without deviation, yet the procedures themselves should be carried out with a bland, any-

mous tone. Describing the steps involved in the employee interview for reasonable suspicion, for example, the “Supervisory Guidelines” lapses into the typographical equivalent of shouting: “**DO NOT** accuse the employee of being ‘drunk’ or ‘on drugs’ or any similar accusations” (emphasis in the original). The tone changes rapidly in the next line, when it directs the supervisor to ask a series of emotionally neutral questions (“Are you ill?” “Have you taken any medications while at work or before coming to work?”) before requiring the supervisor to determine “if a reasonable suspicion exists.” The passive voice is telling here. The question, presumably, is whether or not a reasonable suspicion exists *within the supervisor’s mind*—that is, if the supervisor has a good reason to think that the employee is drunk or stoned. However, the passive voice creates distance between the supervisor and the judgment, obscuring the supervisor’s agency in the process and allowing her to imagine that the suspicion somehow floats in the air above the interaction or is located in the mind of a hypothetical (and, need we add, reasonable) community member. The PowerPoint slides likewise provide a mix of high drama and bland administration. Early in the training, the slide entitled “Why Me?” presents a clipart image of a man pulling the hair from his head with both hands, his collar open, his necktie loose, his face twisted in anxiety and frustration. Soon after, a section of the training provides medical and legal background on the phenomena of drug and alcohol abuse, with images that would be at home in *Scared Straight* or *Reefer Madness*. A stark photograph of a needle, a spoon, a pack of matches, and a length of rope appears beneath the title “Home Heroin Kit.” The clipart image of a PCP user is drawn with bold lines that bring to mind medieval woodcuts or Edvard Munch’s painting “The Scream.” The mask of anonymous administration slips a bit in the slide that introduces the concept of reasonable suspicion, where a clipart image of a bug-eyed employee sweats under a v-shaped lamp, while a supervisor towers above him and points an accusatory finger. After this lapse, the rest of the slides on reasonable suspicion processes revert to the bland tone. “Diagnose nothing, document everything,” states one slide. Another quotes the icon of bureaucratic blandness, *Dragnet*’s Sargent Joe Friday: “Just the FACTS” (capitalization in the original). Here, the denotative content of the words emphasize the flat, anonymous quality of the process, while the uppercase typography drives that theme home with a vengeance. Like *Dragnet* itself, RST is a potboiler dressed in a grey flannel suit.

The contradictory treatment of affect in RST is merely the surface manifestation of a deeper contradiction. Like the legal standard of reasonableness, RST appears to be grounded on the standard of a fair-minded person in the community. This point is hammered home by the ceaseless repetition of the word “reasonable” in every text associated with the complex. But even a cursory reading of the documents makes abundantly clear that RST does not simply reflect those community standards: it dictates them. Our point is not merely that rules can never fully specify all of the elements of situated action or that all practices rely on tacit knowledge, though both of these things are true. Of far greater importance, we want to highlight the extraordinary slight of hand that modern institutional authority entails: *RST justifies itself by reference to the common intuitions of reasonable people. Not content to be grounded on such intuitions,*

however, RST actually regiments the intuitions that it claims to be based on. RST uses a kind of rhetorical legerdemain to legitimate the exercise of power; by showing how the trick is done, we hope to reveal the fundamental place of power and practice hidden at the heart of modern institutions. Institutions do not step outside social life and unproblematically reflect the beliefs of a social group. They themselves are a domain of practice, one whose internal power relations establish and regiment beliefs.

The absurdity of RST is not only in the training itself but in the larger process that its logic implies. An administrator undergoing this training is presented with a series of procedures to follow and a checklist of symptoms that a person would need to observe to be reasonably suspicious that her employee is intoxicated. Here, the procedural texts approach practice in an almost asymptotic fashion, with practice receding and receding as texts become more and more specific. How do I know if the odor I smell is alcohol or cold medicine? How much aspiration of an "s" is necessary before I can consider speech to be slurred? How slow is "slow speech?" What norm of skin color exists between the poles of "pale" and "flushed?" Where are we to set the bar of interpersonal interaction, so that an excess of "openness" or "nervousness" can be determined? And how many of these elements are necessary for my suspicions to be reasonable? Does one need a subsidiary training in "reasonableness olfactory perception," "reasonable phonemic perception," or "reasonable interpersonal communication" to know if one either smells alcohol or cold medicine, hears a slurred "s," or is dealing with an employee who is improperly "open?" And what would guarantee that those training texts are fully explicit? Clearly, the procedural texts can approach practice endlessly and still never catch it. Building on the work of philosopher Roman Ingarden to elaborate a practice oriented theory of language (1996), William Hanks has argued that texts necessarily entail gaps which, ultimately, can only be fleshed out by contextualized, embodied practice. How those gaps are fleshed out depends, of course, on precisely the kinds of historically and socially situated intuitions of reasonableness that the training seeks to fix. In this context, the reasonable suspicion training regiments exactly the sorts of social phenomena that it claims to describe.

In a penetrating analysis of institutional dynamics, Manchester-trained anthropologist F.G. Bailey analyzed the workplace narratives of university administrators (1983). At the center of this discourse, Bailey identified a linked set of rhetorical devices, all of which characterize faculty as unable to govern themselves. Whether they are anarchic or self-interested, incompetent or uncivilized, faculty are simply not capable of running a university, and administrators are needed, the narratives suggest, to save academics from themselves. Bailey argues that the narratives, which he characterizes as "myths," "serve a tactical purpose, to make the administrators' activities (wielding power) more acceptable to themselves and less alarming to those over whom power is exercised" (95). Understood in this way, the representation of social relations in the narratives is an inversion of real world social relations: administrators are not elites at the top of a hierarchy, they are merely "servants" (102) of the institution that they run. While reasonable suspicion training operates in somewhat different domain from the personal experience narratives of Bailey's administrators, the rhetorical structure

of the two is similar: legitimating power, both elite discourse and reasonable suspicion training stands real world relations on their heads. Elites are servants. Training doesn't regiment behavior, it merely describes what anyone in the community would know. Real people are hypothetical community members. Affectively laden interactions are blandly anonymous applications of procedure.

For all of RST's Kafkaesque qualities, the specific issue at stake here (drunkenness in the workplace) doesn't speak directly to the power relations which drive academic institutions—race, class, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, ability and disability. We don't want our colleagues or staff to be drunk or stoned at work, and we are glad that there are ways that such issues can be handled. But while RST is politically banal, the underlying dynamics that it points to are not. Institutions built up around notions like rational administration and the rule of textual policy obscure a series of basic facts: that the institution is constituted, not through texts, but through practices; that texts can never fully account for practices; that even if they could, it is the practice, not the text, that is the body and the being of the institution; that institutions always exist in the context of large-scale power relations from the surrounding society; and that decontextualized standards of fairness often compound social inequity when such contexts are ignored.⁹

One may find it ironic that we have used a close reading of policy texts to make a practice theory argument, but this irony goes to the heart of this topic. By presenting a close reading of these texts, we have sought to illuminate one of the most significant means by which institutional actors legitimate their dominance and reproduce the hierarchy of modern institutions. From a practice theory perspective, texts are best understood as *potentials* for social action; they have no being outside the actions of agents, but they are not infinitely malleable. They can possess a degree of coherence and stability. They crystalize social relations and articulate strategies for addressing familiar situations and routines in social life. When, through situated practice, one actualizes the potentials that texts hold, and when that actualization is successful, one brings into the world a particular set of social relations. This is, of course, the broadest implication of J. L. Austin's insights about performance ([1962] 1965)—that the thing we do with words is create a group of social relations and, with them, a social reality. In problematizing the logic of these texts, we have sought to reveal the exercise of administrative function as constitutive practice.

Folklore and the Reproduction of Institutions

As far as we know, there is no systematic discrimination against drinkers in higher education, but there is systematic discrimination against women, people of color, LGBT people, and the disabled. Today, few mainstream American institutions would hyper-reflexively regiment the habitus of hiring and recruiting in the manner of RST to explicitly disadvantage these groups; such explicitly discriminatory discourses have been placed beyond the pale, and, more importantly, aren't necessary to maintain discriminatory institutions in today's world. Take, for example, what Eduardo Bonilla-Silva calls "color-blind racism" (2001). Here, the mechanisms of racism continue to op-

erate through practice and habitus, despite mission statements and policy documents trumpeting the values of equality. What is necessary to combat racial discrimination are resistant practices—as well as mission statements and procedure documents—that actively acknowledge the racist habitus of American society, understand how an unequal playing field makes seemingly equal rules operate as a mechanism of injustice, and affirmatively act to make institutions less racist. And, of course, we cannot discuss this topic without noting that false accusations of intoxication have been used as a technique of power to discriminate against people of color.

In the US context, issues of race/ethnicity in higher education will most likely bring to mind the topic of college admissions, images of Jim Crow segregation and the early-twentieth century limitations placed on the enrollment of European ethnics in elite US schools, and the legacy that that painful history brings to the present. But even more significant than questions of inclusion and exclusion are questions of constitution and reproduction: the ways that institutions regiment everyday behavior, the possibilities for social change that those everyday practices may have for transforming those institutions, and the way that the practices within an institution interface with other domains of social life. In this context, André Gorz's analysis of the class contradictions in higher education—how the traditional French university allowed the children of elites to reproduce their class status; the way that the post-war expansion of the university created a structurally unsustainable number of managers, proletarianizing the middle class even as the upper echelons of bourgeoisie found ways for higher education to cement their social station; the way that radical education in universities is “dysfunctional” from the stand-point of capitalist reproduction—is as relevant today as it was when he wrote it in 1970. Whether one agrees or disagrees with Gorz's titular prescription (“Destroy the University”), the centrality of the problem of reproduction is clear. The most potent issue for analysis is not gatekeeping but the ways in which everyday practices produce and reproduce institutions, and, through them, larger social orders.

For the analyst of institutions, RST reveals a variety of important dynamics: On a basic level, the absurdity of RST makes clear a set of linked insights from practice theory: that situated practice is inextricably bound to social context and relies on a background of tacit knowledge and values; that language in general and rules in particular can never make fully explicit this tacit background; that practice, therefore, can never be reduced to simple rule following. Taking these insights together, we see that there is an inherent limit to the reflexivity of modern institutions: institutions may be shaped by texts, but they are constituted by practices; rules, policies, and procedures can never fully regiment that fundamental, constitutive reality. Though institutions are made of practices, texts are not merely epiphenomenal or insignificant. As tools of power, as the reification of structure, they have a significant shaping force when they are actualized in practice. Our analysis of the RST documents reveals one of the distinctive rhetorics of legitimation that is central to the exercise of institutional power. The institutional practices of administration regiment the conduct of subordinates, but it does so in a unique way—by inverting the very relations that it establishes, by

pretending that exercise of power is merely its description. Here, the rhetoric of reification (rules, procedures, and organizational charts; the use of passive voice; anonymous, affectless prose) and the reference to common sense, reason, and community standards obscures the foundations of practice—and of power—that constitute institutions. Indeed as Etienne Wenger's research on medical claims processors has shown (1998), forms, checklists, and conventions give the employee trained in administering a protocol the ability to maintain an air of detached objectivity that conceals his/her power to approve or reject a reimbursement, a situation parallel to requiring a drug or alcohol test from a subordinate, as laid out in the RST documents that we discussed above. Here, the claims processor or university administrator can deflect responsibility by arguing that he/she is merely applying a predetermined formula and following procedure, or, in cases of leniency, he/she can employ a rhetoric of agency by referencing administrative discretion or special cases.

The relevance of all of this for folklore is direct. Whether we have been attending to the ethnographic particulars of social life, refocusing researcher attention away from decontextualized texts and toward situated practices, or aggressively pursuing critical, populist projects, we as folklorists are at our best when we understand folklore as situated practice and explore the role of such practices in constituting institutions, social orders, and their relations of power. The expressive culture of the white collar world is one place where occupational habitus is thematized, but taking a broader view, it is *everyday institutional practice, what we might call institutional folklife*, where power is enacted, reproduced, and resisted. In this sense, occupational folklore in large-scale organizations is the folklife of modernity and is central to the reproduction of institutions.

From the perspective of Robert Howard's recent work, "vernacular expression" refers to those forms of communication that "emerge from the bottom up," the counter-institutional that emerges in the context of institutions (2008, 194). Offering a richly dialectical vision, Howard's work presents significant social insights. A somewhat different approach, which we are suggesting here, is less concerned with drawing boundaries between the institutional and the counter-institutional. Instead, we would focus on exploring the ensemble of practices performed by actors at every level of a hierarchy, treating that full ensemble as constitutive of institutions, and discovering how dynamics like mundane reproduction, the cooptation of resistance by those in power, or social transformation arise from those ensembles.¹⁰ In this context, the work of occupational folklorists (e.g., Eckstorm and Smyth [1927] 1971, Korson 1938, Green 1972, Dundes and Pagter 1975, Santino 1986, Bell and Forbes 1994, Janelli and Yim 1995, Hatch and Jones 1997, Tangherlini 2000, McCarl 2006, Leary 2013) should be at the center of any practice based analysis of social life. To use the terms from Robert McCarl's classic formulation of the subject, one might say that it is the application of workplace technique that produces and reproduces most of what institutions are, verbal art and customary lore are spaces in which practitioners reflect upon those practices (1978, 1986), and laborlore is the site where class consciousness is brought into being and class struggle, the very engine of institutional and broader structural

change, is produced (2006).¹¹ Read in this way, the expressive culture of or about the workplace—the ritualized and carefully calibrated scolding of subordinates by superiors, the company mandated after-hour recreational activities, and the very arrangement of desks in the office that Roger Janelli and Dawnhee Yim describe in their study of the Korean managerial class (1995); the stories that stressed paramedics tell to exert control over their disorderly world discussed in Timothy R. Tangherlini's work (2000)—can be best read as reflexive practices, forms of expressive behavior by which workers and managers struggle over the meaning of work and the social relations that take place there. Inasmuch as these forms of conduct occur *in* the workplace, they are part of the larger mix of constitutive practices that produces and reproduces institutions. (Of course, in the culture industries, expressive practices are the primary techniques of work.) But even if a given practice is only incidental to the daily routine and only takes a small amount of company time, these forms of artistic behavior have the potential to be highly significant by shaping our understanding of the meaning of our work, ourselves as workers, our institution, or our class position and class relations. As we have observed elsewhere (Del Negro and Berger 2004, 160, n5), de Certeau acknowledged as much in the first volume of the *Practice of Everyday Life* ([1980] 1984: 81, 217, n4), when he cited Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer's ethnography of speaking (1974) as an essential means for understanding quotidian conduct. He and his colleagues drive home that idea in the second volume of that study, when they describe folklore research as "the socioethnographic analysis of everyday life" and point to it as one of the foundations of their project (de Certeau, Giard, and Mayol [1994] 1998, 7).

From the early work on occupational folklore by scholars like Fannie Hardy Eckstorm and Mary Winslow Smyth ([1927] 1971) or George Korson (e.g., 1938) to the more contemporary research pursued under the aegis of laborlore like that of McCarl, folklorists have richly explored the worlds of the workplace. As scholars like Susan Davis (2010) have shown, it is a painful fact of folklore's intellectual history in the US that the discipline has not been immune to the heavy hand of anti-communism, and the struggle to see occupational folklore, not only as an expression of working class experience but also as a site of domination, exploitation, and resistance, has been a crucial factor in the development of this literature. The populism that is so central to folklore studies in general and occupational folklore in particular has generated a striking irony here. Folklore scholars have rightly lavished attention on workers and their lives as a critical corrective to the cultural domination of capitalist societies by the leisure and managerial classes. Folklorists have made invaluable contributions here, but, as one of the anonymous readers of this article rightly observed, our attention to the silenced voices of workers has meant that we have paid far less attention to the small group interactions, oral traditions, and everyday practices of middle managers and elites. (The work of Janelli and Yim [1995] is an important exception here.) Structural and practical constraints make fieldwork with managers and elites a challenging enterprise, but middle management culture, elite culture, and the culture that emerges in contexts where supervisors and their subordinates interact is vital if we are to have a three-dimensional understanding of how institutions, and social life in general, is

produced and reproduced.

It is, of course, far beyond the scope of this essay to try present a definition of folklore, an exercise that has generated much heat in our field and, at times, less light than one might have hoped. A more productive task, we would suggest, is to look at the crucial work that folklorists have achieved, set it in a broader cross-disciplinary context, and understand how it contributes to the wider discourses in the humanities and humanistic social sciences. Taking this approach, we would suggest that the two intellectual traditions that Bronner discusses so richly—European-style practice folkloristics and American-style performance folkloristics—are complementary, with the former illuminating the situated, instrumental conduct of everyday life and the latter exploring the heightened, expressive behavior by which the instrumental is reflected upon and made meaningful. Taken together, the conduct in these two domains, the instrumental and the expressive, are responsible for the lion's share of the constitution and reproduction of institutions. Of even greater significance, it is the interplay between conduct in these domains that folklorists have been uniquely skilled at analyzing and that is so critical in determining the shape and direction of institutional life.

Above, we suggested that expressive culture has the potential to influence even the most mundane, instrumental practice. We emphasize its *potential* significance, because the consequences of expressive practice for other forms of social conduct and the wider institutional or social orders that they constitute is among the most complex of topics (see Berger 2009, 97–135). The practices of occupational folklore may humanize the workplace, encourage company loyalty, ventilate social tension, exercise social control, promote a narrowly sectional unionism, generate a broad class solidarity, or foster radical change. Indeed, any single practice may operate in different ways in different contexts or may lead in multiple, contradictory directions. As Sherry Ortner (2005) aptly observed, “all practices operate within a ‘balky world’ (Sewell 2005:179) that threatens to undermine their intended meanings or effects” (2006, 10). The nexus of practice and its consequences is a place where the most significant questions about social life play out—self-interest or solidarity, accommodation or resistance, inclusion or transformation. And under conditions of neo-liberalism, these dynamics are even more complex. As Gertraud Koch has argued (2012), the post-Fordist world is one in which occupational folklore has been increasingly co-opted by elites for purposes of efficiency, management, and control, the line between paid and unpaid labor is shifted or blurred, and precarious workers participate in a complex “bricolage of activities”—some waged, some unwaged—just to make ends meet (Warneken 2006 quoted in Koch 2012, 161). When we take folklore as everyday practices, we focus attention on the site of reproduction, and it is here that the dialectics of structure and agency play out. By taking such an approach, we as folklorists can make a valuable contribution to the critical analysis of institutions, and, ultimately, of contemporary social life.

Notes

- 1 I (Berger) discuss the relationships among practice theory, folklore, and ethnomusicology, as well as the formative influence of practice theory on my early scholarship in, Berger (2008).
- 2 As Anthony Bak Buccitelli and Casey Schmitt observed to us in a personal communication in 2015, the paradoxical quality of the identity of institutions has formal parallels with the classical Ship of Theseus puzzle.
- 3 Giddens's writings in the 1970s and 1980s can be characterized as neo-Marxist, but by the mid-1990s his ideas had changed substantially. His 1994 book *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics* tried to chart a social philosophy that would, in his view, serve as an alternative to both capitalism and socialism. While that book critiqued the so-called "market socialism" that some writers at that time were dubbing a "Third Way" (68–69), Giddens fully embraced this term four years later in *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy*. During this period, Giddens became an advisor to then UK Prime Minister Tony Blair and was strongly associated with Blair's neo-liberal "new labor" politics. Giddens's writings from this period have been widely rejected on the radical left and depart substantially from the Marxist tradition. In this essay, we confine ourselves to Giddens's early, neo-Marxist work.
- 4 It is worth noting that while Bourdieu was strongly critical of phenomenology, C. Jayson Throop and Keith M. Murphy (2002) have convincingly shown that many of his most significant ideas, including habitus and his ideas about embodied practice, are rooted in the work of Edmund Husserl ([1913] 1962, [1931] 1960). See also Berger (1999, 2008, 2009) on the relationship between phenomenology and practice theory.
- 5 *West's Encyclopedia of American Law*, 1998, s.v. "Reasonable."
- 6 *West's Encyclopedia of American Law*, 1998, s.v. "Reasonable Person."
- 7 *West's Encyclopedia of American Law*, 1998, s.v. "Reasonable Woman."
- 8 We use a close reading of documents, rather than ethnographic methods here, for two reasons. First, the practical constraints on doing an ethnography of reasonable suspicion training are substantial. Interactions between managers and their subordinates regarding the suspected use of drugs or alcohol are highly sensitive and have substantial legal implications. It would be challenging, to say that least, to gaining Institutional Review Board authority to conduct this kind of research. Further, there is no way to predict when such interactions might take place, so arranging to observe them would be extremely difficult. These problems may not be insurmountable, and ethnographic data on this topic would certainly be interesting; however, our main reason for not doing this kind of work is that it would be tangential to the project that we wish to pursue here. Our aim in analyzing RST is not to explore how individual agents negotiate bureaucratic rules and procedures, but to shed light on the circular institutional logic by which the procedures themselves are legitimated, thus highlighting the contours of the problem of institutional reproduction. If institutions can rely on universal rationality or on unproblematic community standards of meaning or value, than it is easy to see them as somehow independent of the agents that serve their various roles. Being a manager or a worker would be fully defined by compendia of rules and procedures, and the goals of the institutions would align in a direct

and straightforward manner with human needs. Questions about structure and agency (which, ultimately, are questions about the ontological status of social phenomena like structures or institutions) might present logical puzzles for philosophers, but they would have no real significance for social analysis. But this is *not* the case. When we understand how institutions regiment the very intuitions that they claim to be founded upon, it becomes far easier to see how institutional actors are not merely instantiating an abstract structure but, instead, bringing it into being. Structure and agency are thus not two neatly separable spheres—the one abstract and existing outside of space and time, the other a product of concrete social agents—but rather dimensions of social practice, which constitutes both institutions, and, in far more complex ways, social life as a whole.

- 9 To be clear, we are not arguing that the relationship between texts and practices is the force that impels institutions. Power—within institutions, the power of managers over subordinates; within societies, the power of the capital class over the working classes—is the engine that drives social life, and the relationships among institutional authority, its textual legitimation, and its articulation in practice is just one place in which power plays itself out. In this context, social phenomena like RST are only one technique of control among many in the contemporary institutions.
- 10 In this sense, we echo the view of Hatch and Jones (1997), who warn against reading photocopy lore as necessarily counter-hegemonic and urge researchers to explore the particular ways in which organizational folklore plays out in specific historical and cultural contexts.
- 11 Seeking to combine ideas from folklore studies with approaches from organizational behavior and management theory, the liberal humanism of Michael Owen Jones's organizational folkloristics involves a political orientation that is very different from the critical class analysis of McCarl and the neo-Marxism of Bourdieu and the early Giddens. Despite the well-publicized conflicts between Jones and McCarl (Jones 1991, McCarl 1992), some elements of Jones's work resonate significantly with a practice theory perspective. While Jones's "Works of Art, Art as Work, and the Arts of Working—Implications for Improving Organizational" (1984), for example, emphasizes the ways that folklore can be used to humanize the workplace and doesn't engage themes of struggle and the conflict of material interests, Jones explicitly acknowledges that everyday practice makes up the life of organizations and that the folklore of institutions is the space in which such institutions are made meaningful (178). His essay "Why Folklore and Organization(s)" re-reads the management literature's concepts of "informal organizations" and "spontaneous organizations" (social relations within institutions that emerge outside the formal hierarchy and sanctioned order) as organizational folklore and recognizes these forms of practice as central to the reality of institutional life. And "Photocopylore at Work" (Hatch and Jones 1997) follows the broad trend of both practice theory and performance theory to focus attention, not on decontextualized texts, but on situated practices of production, distribution, and reception. We do not wish to overplay the similarities between Jones's approach and that of practice theory: Jones's desire to "perfect [the] form" of organizational life (1984, 178) and humanize contemporary institutions is in many ways fundamentally incompatible with work in the Marxist tradition, which sees domination and exploitation as basic features of any organization existing under conditions of capital and takes as its

project their fundamental transformation. We can, however, mark the points of similarity, while acknowledging the substantial differences.

For a related connection from an explicitly Marxist perspective, see Limón (1983), who argues that the everyday expressive practices that workers create and share with one another on company time, whether verbal or material, represent a kind of unalienated form of labor which diverts attention from the profit motive.

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Response

“We have a situation here!”:

On Enactment as a Middle Ground between Practice and Performance¹

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Enactment in the Post-Actor-Network Theory of Annemarie Mol

“So I need a word that doesn’t suggest too much, a word with not too much of an academic history. The English language has a nice one in store: enact” (Mol 2002, 33). When looking for a word to describe the multiple doings and beings of one disease, post-Actor-Network-theorist Annemarie Mol came up with the concept of “enactment” in her book *the body multiple*, claiming that it had less baggage or discussion connected to it than the concept of “performance”² and a different notion of daily routines as well.³ The term “enactment” was intended to reflect her understanding, that in each practice one might encounter in a hospital—therapy, operation or diagnosis—a slightly different version of disease would be enacted by the situational actants, because the disease is very different depending whether you look at it through a microscope, listen to it through the narrations of patients, or face it in the operating room. As she describes it:

A patient information leaflet might describe atherosclerosis as the gradual obstruction of the arteries, but in hospital practice this one medical condition appears to be many other things. From one moment, place, apparatus, specialty, or treatment, to the next, a slightly different ‘atherosclerosis’ is being discussed, measured, observed, or stripped away. (blurb)

Thus there are multiple diseases enacted that hang together somehow, connected through certain translation processes and practices that make one specific enactment of the disease transportable from one part of the hospital to another.

Actor-Network-Theory (ANT)—which has also been called the Sociology of Translation (cf. Callon 1986)—is concerned with the construction of knowledge and technology not as a singular or linear process but as network (cf. Sørensen 2012, 327). This means less a simple focus on materialities than is often implied. Rather, ANT is about (actor-) networks and situations, or, as Bruno Latour has stated, a view in which “attachments are first, actors are second” (2005, 217). Phenomena and entities are formed only through the interplay of diverse actants. Their potentials and possibilities are only realized in specific human (and non-human) actor networks or interactions. The easiest example to sum up this perspective is the interplay of gun and human. When looking at gun shooting, Bruno Latour asks: Who is firing, the gun

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or the human? The answer to this question also bears on how to prevent gun violence: Should we have stricter restrictions on firearms or should we have more social workers or psychological facilities throughout the country? To argue that the reason for gun shootings is that there are too many guns out there would be techno-deterministic, while arguing that people who have become mentally unstable or violent due to their childhoods or social environments cause gun violence would be socio-deterministic. Thus, Latour argues instead that guns and humans form a situational hybrid that shoots. Only when the potentialities and dispositions of gun and human come together does a shooting occur.

Actor-Network-Theory has been called postconstructivist because it looks at the situation and practices of knowledge or technological production (cf. Degele and Simms 2004, 259). Originating in Science and Technology Studies, it has been widely influential in urban studies (cf. Färber 2014; Farias and Bender 2010), economics (cf. Callon 2007), and political science (cf. Latour 2002), and has been combined with other theoretical approaches (cf. Dölemeyer and Rodatz 2010; Kendall and Wickham 1999; van Dyk 2010; Walters 2012). Furthermore, while ANT started by looking at stabilizing and closing processes (cf. Callon 1986), it now has turned more and more to the transformative, fluid aspects of actor-networks, especially in the work of Helen Verran (2001) and Annemarie Mol, which has earned them the label “Post-ANT”.

Against this background, the specifics of the term “enactment” and its relevance to praxis- and performance-theory, as well as the method it brings along, begin to become obvious. Enactment, as Mol conceives of it within a fluid network of practices, can be understood as the conjuncture of diverse human and non-human actors who interact to create the situation and its entities or objects.

It is possible to say that in practices objects are enacted. This suggests that activities take place—but leaves the actors vague. It also suggests that in the act, and only then and there, something is—being enacted. Both suggestions fit in with the praxiography that I try to engage here. Thus an ethnographer/praxiographer out to investigate diseases never isolates these from the practices in which they are, what one may call, enacted. She stubbornly takes notice of the techniques that make things visible, audible, tangible, knowable. She may talk bodies—but she never forgets about microscopes. (Mol 2002, 33)

Accordingly, the beginning and end of the situation depend on this co-presence of multiple actors. Similarly, Lauren Berlant in her definition of situation starts with a sentence used by the police: “We have a situation here.” Based on the affective status connected to this phrase in police work, she defines situations to be a state of things in which something that will perhaps matter is unfolding amid the usual activity of life (2011, 5). A situation is something that could become an event—meaning that it changes something in the course of the world .

In addition to a situational attentiveness, enactment is a way to look at practices while looking at humans *and* objects. Thus enactment and Mol bring a symmetric view (see above) to practice theory. It brings the affinity of practice theory towards

materiality to another level and starts from the assumption, that practices are not arrays of human activity, but of human and non-human activities. This furthering of practice theory and its descriptive mode becomes especially clear when Mol writes in a descriptive mode, which is why one of these passages is cited here at length:

In the consulting room something is done. It can be described as ‘pain in Mrs Tilstra’s left lower leg that begins on walking a short distance on flat ground and stops after rest.’ This phenomenon goes by the medical name intermittent claudication. Whatever the condition of her body before she entered the consulting room, in ethnographic terms Mrs. Tilstra did not yet have this disease before she visited a doctor. She didn’t enact it. When all alone, Mrs. Tilstra felt pain when walking, but this pain was diffuse and not linked up to a specific walking distance on flat ground. The trouble Mrs. Tilstra encountered when she tried to walk her dog did not yet have the shape that emerges when she answers her doctor’s question. This does not imply that the doctor brings Mrs. Tilstra’s disease into being. [...] without a patient he isn’t able to make a diagnosis. In order for ‘intermittent claudication’ to be practiced, two people are required. A doctor and a patient. [...] And in addition to these two people there are other elements that play a more or less important role. The desk, the chairs, the general practitioner, the letter: they all participate in the events that together, do’ intermittent claudication. As does Mrs. Tilstra’s dog, without whom she might not even have tried to walk more than fifty meters after which her left leg starts hurting. (2002, 22-23)

It is neither Mrs. Tilstra nor the doctor nor the dog alone that bring intermittent claudication and atherosclerosis into being—that enact the disease. It is all of them together in one moment. And this moment becomes transferable through the patient’s files, through further examinations and through the diagnosis itself: only because a name is given to the bundle of circumstances described by Mrs. Tilstra, a set of solutions can be attached to her walking problems. The disease is not only constructed, declared, diagnosed, performed here; it is made, because it is more than real. It is corporeal, physical, discursively all at the same time. And it is multiple, because what you get when you try to look at the disease is different from what you get when you try to feel it by touching and examining legs and blood vessels.

Mol’s approach to a disease and hospitals via “enactment” then is “a way out of the dichotomy between the knowing subject and the objects-that-are-known” (2002, 50). It spreads the activity of knowing widely, over tables, knives, records, microscopes, buildings. Thus it is neither patient nor doctor who knows a disease or condition; instead the disease is enacted through practices of examination, through the interplay of a bodily knowledge in the patient, in the doctor, as well as instruments and facilities. Thus not only atherosclerosis is enacted in a situation and dependent on a lot of different elements coming together, but also the doctor and the patient become enacted here. If the patient does not behave patient-like and does not tell the doctor anything that might be of interest to him or her, or if the other actants in the situation, e.g. the microscopes contradict what the patient is saying, he or she does not become a patient. And if the doctor or surgeon cannot come up with a diagnosis, i.e. if he cannot interact with or relate to the other elements in the situation, he or she does not become

the patient’s doctor here. Thus no actant or element is given or starts as a clear-cut entity in a situation.

Mol’s usage of the term “enactment” thus brings the engagement with practices to a very situative and symmetric level. Yet still—and although Mol has banned the term from her book— there is a certain closeness to performance theory that also focuses on the “microcosm of the social situation or scene,” the agency of the performer, and the emergence of phenomena pervades (Bronner 2012, 24; cf.: Kapchan 1996). Thus, one could argue, that enactment is kind of in the middle between performance and practice. While being located in practice theory, it situates these practices in a way that is perhaps compatible with performance theory as well.

Enactment, Change and Rupture in Engin Isin

When Turkish citizens claim their rights through the European Court of Human Rights, are they not acting as European citizens, despite not having EU citizenship? When asylum-seekers and Roma stand together to call for more political rights and less discrimination, are they not acting as European citizens? When campaigners for sex-worker rights throughout Europe organise a demonstration, are they not acting as European citizens even if they do not go through the formal channels of political engagement? (ENACT 2013)

These are the examples and questions Engin Isin and his co-researchers give to explain their research project, ENACT. Citizenship, they argue, is about more than legal status and is therefore “more than granting rights ‘from above’” (ENACT 2013). It is enacted everyday through actions and acts and therefore, the complex concept of citizenship should be regarded as a permanent and ongoing negotiation. Thus if you look for an active definition of citizenship (within Europe), those without legal status or those outside (of Europe) also come into view. They are a part of enacting (European) citizenship. And they are challenging and changing what is understood to be (European) citizenship through their acts of citizenships.

What is an act of citizenship? Acts of citizenship are moments in which—like in the examples above—people constitute themselves as citizens irrespective of their status. Thus “an act posits or articulates a right that is not yet there but which may exist elsewhere [...]. [...] An act starts to take what it asks for. For there to be an act it must perform or enact its demand” (2013, 38).

Isin differentiates between action and acts: something perceivable like a performance is an action. An act is instead the transcendental quality or abstraction of an action. To call an action an act is an analytic move by the observer or researcher that highlights the rupture with the status quo, with routinized, habitualized or institutionalized structures or givens. Acts are “a rupture rather than merely being without authorisation and convention” (ibid.). To act according to this perspective means neither to start from a script nor to leave it completely, but to constitute a new scene with all its roles (cf. Köster-Eiserfunke, Reichhold, and Schwiertz 2014). Thus acts point to the contingency of every regime. But, acts are only one mode of (doing/

expressing) citizenship, along with status and habitus.⁴

This is why Isin et al. also differentiates between active citizens and activist citizens: while the notion of an active citizen depicts the citizen with a status that takes responsibility, that votes, pays taxes, participates in polls, initiates petitions for referendums, participates in round tables or local politics or does his or her jury duty, activist citizens act in a way that interrupts given politics and orders—especially if they are not ‘legal citizens’. Isin concedes, though, that even voting and taxpaying can be acts of citizenship; for example if the rich pay more taxes by their own choice to break with the existing taxation system—thus challenging and maybe even changing it. Therefore while active citizens perform scripts, activist ones write scripts and thus have an effect.

The question then remains as to *how* an act must be to be disruptive: Does it have to be an event? Does it have to be public or have an effect or can it be imperceptible, that is a tiny action within daily routine that withdraws and breaks away from order? On this point, Isin et al. are very specific:

An ‘act’ can legitimately be understood in different ways. But they are not the same as any daily ‘actions.’ Acts, for our purposes, have some element of public visibility or purpose or political resonance. They might be single acts, or they might be a series of discrete acts—more or less continuous over a period of time, in other words. (Saward 2009)

Thus acts of citizenship are not only disruptive, they are always events, are always public. Accordingly, instead of looking at institutions and rights or subjective perspectives on Europe or European citizenship for example, Isin et al. look for a catalogue of mobility practices and claims. “The underlying methodological assumption is that acts do not only reflect perceptions, but constitute citizens, in and of themselves, irrespective of whether people are conscious of it or not” (Isin 2008b). Thus for example, mobility can be understood as act of citizenship and constitute an alternative notion of European citizenship. Questions that accordingly guide the research conducted by Isin et al. are:

What do these acts question, create, or reinforce with respect to our understanding of ‘European citizenship’? What idea(s) of European citizenship do they enact? Did the act(s) being studied have an impact on the way European citizenship status can, or should be, understood? For example, did it (or they) offer a potential way to expand the reach or relevance of the notion of European citizenship? Or are they asserting a ‘status’ (perhaps new or unfamiliar) that is not formally recognised as being a part of European citizenship, in order (subsequently) to claim that status for themselves (and others)? (Saward 2009)

Engin Isin and his colleagues use “enactment” in quite a different way from Mol. While Mol uses the term to avoid the notion of performance, to convey a situational and symmetric approach to everyday practices like medical consultations, in Isin et

al.’s ENACT-project, the term at once slides closer to aspects being associated with performance theory (publicity, singularity, difference to ordinary life, micro-context, metapragmatics, metadiscourse, freedom, resistance) and thus to Abraham’s (1977) understanding of the term. And yet, it stays within the realm of making or inaugurating or constituting something. Thus Isin is quite far away from practice theory on the one hand, I would say, but on the other hand he includes habitus in his model in order to put enactment in opposition and relation to it. He argues that acts are not always, but most of the time, disruptive of habitus. Thus while not bringing together performance and habitus theory in the way Mol does, Isin brings a critical angle to the enactment-concept.

The Situational Angle of Practices as seen through the Looking Glass of Enactment

Contrasting these two understandings of enactment—one where enactment is disruptive and one where it is part of everyday life—it becomes obvious, that in Isin’s understanding, enactment is closer to a folklore understanding of the term, while in Mol’s, it is closer to an ethnographic understanding. Still, I would point out that, in both understandings and usages of the term, there is the potential to zoom into situations and thus practice and transformation. The term “enactment” brings together a sensitivity for banal routine (Mol) as well as for events, situations of change and thus also for critique or for disturbing the taken for granted (Isin, but also Butler). Thus starting from day-to-day practices, the term and its perspective is always open to situative emergences, to shifts and turns, or to say it with Lauren Berlant: if a situation is “a state of things in which something that will perhaps matter is unfolding amid the usual activity of life” (2011, 5), then the concept and perspective of “enactment” is sensitive towards both: the usual activity and the something that will perhaps matter. If something that matters happens, situations become events that change the course of discourse or history.

A situation can thus be both from the perspective of enactment: it can be a normal, day-to-day situation, but it can also be transformative. Which of the two is true is an empirical question then. This is also why the concept of “enactment” could be a possible bridge over the “theoretical gulf” in Folklore Studies separating performance-based and practice-based approaches.

In his article “Practice Theory in Folklore and Folklife Studies,” Simon Bronner (2012) looked at the phenomenon of practice theory being widely used in Europe to deal with folklore for some time, while in the US the same applies to performance theory. He wrote:

Since the 1960s, folkloristic approaches in North America and Europe have been thematised with the keywords of performance and practice, respectively. Although the orientations built around the keywords share a concern for conceptualising folklore as a type of expressive action, significant theoretical differences are apparent. Arising at a similar juncture in the twentieth century in response to social upheaval, they differ in the use of explanation or generalisation with performance often representing

singularity (and emergence) of an event and practice signifying the aggregate (and precedence) of folk behaviour. (2012, 23)

While both approaches want to deal with “expressive action,” with action/context/process and both want to further a “descriptive methodology,” there are ample differences between the two concepts (ibid., 24). Practice seems to be what performance is not and vice versa. While practice seems to be the routine, repetitive, usual, mundane, non-aesthetic activities representing social and cultural structures or located in practice communities, performance seems to be artistic, aesthetic, creative, free, resistant. While practice seems to be about what people do, performance seems to be more often what they say. Performance theory focuses on “the microcosm of the social situation or scene,” while practice theory focuses on a “holistic understanding of culture” (Bronner 2012, 24). This is why performance and practice seem to be polar opposites.

According to Bronner, however, this confrontation of the two concepts is much too simple. European folklore scholars use practice theory to be more descriptive, while US folklore scholars use performance theory for the same reason.

What is really interesting to me about the concept of enactment, therefore, is that it is somewhat in the middle of these two concepts while also bringing a new descriptive quality to situational analysis: it enables one to see not only humans but also non-humans actants within a situation. Above all, enactment does not take practices and repetitions as a given, but makes you wonder “why or how [...] action is repeated and varied,” and what is in a situation, whether it might become an event or not (Bronner 2012, 39). Therefore, it opens to the potentiality and multiplicity of each and every situation.

Notes

- 1 The title phrase was drawn from Lauren Berlant’s book “Cruel Optimism” (2011).
- 2 “In the literature there has been a lot of discussion about the term performance—a term that does not only resonate the stage but also the success after difficult work and the practical effects of words being spoken. I do not want these resonances, nor do I want this text to be burdened with discussions in which it seeks no part. But if one doesn’t want to be part of, let alone be played out in, controversies raging the literature, if one doesn’t want one’s text to be ground between concerns that aren’t one’s own, then what can be done? It may be helpful to avoid the buzzword, to look for a new term, a word that is still relatively innocent, one that resonates with fewer agendas. I have found one. Even if I have been using the term performance elsewhere in the past, I have carefully banned it from the present text” (Mol 2002, 41).
- 3 This perception of the term “enactment” as a term without history is highly problematic but quite typical for its genealogy. Although the concept has kind of been there for the past forty or so years, it has been newly invented and claimed at least four times, each time without many references to the predecessors: one of the first usages of the term was by folklorist Roger Abrahams in 1977. Building on Victor Turner’s dramaturgical perspective on folklore as well as a rhetoric-based approach, he argued for an enactment-centered

theory of folklore. Further, drawing on enactment was his “attempt to find a term which includes performances, games, rituals, festivities, etc., in short, any cultural event in which community members come together to participate, employ the deepest and most complex multivocal and polyvalent signs and symbols of their repertoire of expression thus entering into a potentially significant experience” (1977, 80). Enactment to him was thus a category broader than performance, including every “heightened and often self-consciously rendered cultural experiences [...] in which the coming together is prepared far, psychologically and otherwise, and participation is thereby strongly encouraged” (ibid., 81). What Abrahams calls enactments, are experiences and events that “stylize and epitomize the *everyday*” (ibid., 84-85) and are more framed and focused than other experiences. They thus transcend everyday life and are occasions of high intensity. Through stylizing, through enactment, life becomes self-conscious. Therefore enactments are always strange in Abraham’s perspective.

This understanding of enactments as special occasions and different from everyday life, as transcendent experiences, is quite opposite to other usages of the term, e.g. by organizational psychologist Karl Weick in 1988, by gender and queer theorist Judith Butler in 1990 or by Annemarie Mol in 2002. For economist Günther Ortman, for example, enactment is doing, is establishing meaning and perspectives, is performative determination and thus is also part of the everyday (1988).

This is also why gender and queer theorist Judith Butler has used the term to frame her understanding of sex and gender. Taking speech act theory further, she argues that not only do performative acts produce what they name, but that day-to-day routines are performative or producing our (gendered) reality. In her groundbreaking book *Gender Trouble* (1990) she describes “gender as an enactment that performatively constitutes the appearance of its own interior fixity” (89) and sex as “a performatively enacted signification,” (44) “[n]o longer believable as an interior ‘truth’ of dispositions and identity” (ibid.). Butler argues, that the gendered body “has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality” (173), among them “corporeal signs and other discursive means” (ibid.).

- 4 Habit^{us}, for ENACT, is a mode of citizenship, or a way in which citizenship is instantiated. It refers to settled, implicitly accepted guiding norms of belonging or collectivity in smaller or larger communities. [...] Actions or practices within habit^{us}—that is, daily habitual actions—do reinforce habit^{us}, often unthinkingly. But there can be more conscious and significant acts of reinforcement, too, such as when a political leader says, “This community believes in citizenship traditions X and Y, and we must defend these traditions.” It is true that “acts of citizenship” in ENACT are more often focussed on disrupting, or acting to rupture, existing habits/habit^{us} of European citizenship.

But reinforcement of existing European citizenship habit^{us} is also an important topic for ENACT’s attention. Court decisions and legal rulings, for example, that bear upon European citizenship may reinforce habit^{us} by reinforcing emergent norms” (ENACT 2009).

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Response

Making Experiences in the Digital Era

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Practice theory has long been part of the theoretical and methodological repertoire of European ethnology. Pierre Bourdieu's anthropologically inspired sociology has been particularly influential (Bourdieu 1977, 1984, 1990), as well as Michel de Certeau's historical (2000) and ethnographic (1984) investigations. Though they may not have explicitly referred to themselves as European ethnologists, they were doing what we do: investigating the activities of everyday life in European societies and urban settings and at the same time interrogating the boundaries drawn between them and what is labeled non-Western and/or premodern. It is no wonder, then, that they have been a permanent fixture on syllabi and in bibliographies in this field for the last 25 to 30 years. And yet, only in the last ten to fifteen years has there been increasing talk of a 'practice turn' in European ethnology, broadly conceived as a turn away from the dominant paradigm of 'culture as text' and its focus on meaning. Ethnographers have been prompted by this turn to rely more heavily on the data acquired during participant observation and to look more carefully at what people are *doing*, rather than placing the narrative interview, what people are *saying*, at the center of their analysis. And when working with historical material, the 'practice turn' has inspired European ethnologists to think about historical anthropology more explicitly in terms of ethnography, looking in their sources for traces of everyday practices rather than focusing on the discourse the sources reproduce (see e.g. Roodenburg 2012, Wietschorke 2013).

Whereas Bourdieu's theory remains an important touchstone in these debates, it has also come increasingly under fire for focusing too much on the 'structure' side of the dialectic between social structure and individual actors, minimizing the ability of actors to maneuver within it. De Certeau figures prominently as Bourdieu's foil in this regard, but as Andreas Reckwitz (2002) points out, other members of the practice-theory 'family' also view this approach as one that reinstates the importance of the self-reflective actor over and against 'structure' (see e.g. Ortner 2005). 'Practice' is not always used in the Bourdieuan sense. The fact that the recent turn toward practice in European ethnology is motivated by a desire to emphasize the agency of individual actors and their own creativity in everyday life (see Fenske/Bendix 2007) is indicative of this much broader understanding of the concept, one that may not be so opposed to 'performance' as one might think.

Looking less at what people are saying than to what they are doing entails engaging with a concept of performance. I would agree with Simon Bronner (2012) that European

ethnologists tend to subsume performance under practice when conceiving it broadly as ‘doing culture’. There is clearly an interest in the performative aspect of culture in European ethnology and in the humanities in general, as the broad reception of the work of Erika Fischer-Lichte in recent years has suggested (2008). She makes the helpful distinction between performance as event and performativity as principle – both of which have been important in the recent turn to practice. In his essay in this volume, Bronner links practice quite firmly to the cognitive, emphasizing such terms as ‘mind’ and ‘knowledge’, but I would maintain that the turn away from a focus on meaning has led to a focus on aesthetics and ‘experience’ and how they are linked to performance and performativity. European ethnologists working with practice theory tend to think of it more decidedly through the body, as instrument as well as medium, which is to say that the practice turn has led to a more intense engagement with sensory, affective, and emotional dimensions of everyday life (Roodenburg 2012), often embedded in the field’s long-standing interest in material artifacts. The repetitive nature of practice also forces us to turn our attention to the past and to think about how bodies themselves are shaped by the uses they have been put to and the habits they have acquired. This may be just another way of talking about ‘structure’ and ‘structuration’ and emphasizing the reciprocal movements of doing and being done to, of shaping and being shaped, but it is crucial that the body itself be included in this dynamic. The body as the medium for experience is produced by practice, making experience itself historically and culturally situated. That is to say, it is not the meaning of the experience alone which is culturally specific, but also its phenomenological dimension, the way it is had (cf. Scheer 2012).

This is why people invest so much energy in creating the conditions for a certain experience. Perhaps this is even a way of thinking about what performance as a reflective, creative activity is actually doing for people. In Casey Schmitt’s piece, for example, people organize their crossing of the boundary into the wilderness in a way that allows them to arrange their bodies in accordance with the “careful, reverent recreation” (p. 137) they seek or expect. Matthias Klückmann notes that the street festival is put together each year so that residents of a multicultural neighborhood may “actualize themselves as being part of this special community” (p. 45). His piece also shows how the practice theory approach encourages us to think more carefully about what is actually meant by ‘experience’. He delves deeply into this question, asking how we can conceptualize experience as a ‘sense’ – in this case, a sense of community, belonging, collective identity or ‘we-ness’ – that emerges from doing things.

‘Experience’ is often invoked to denote the absence of mediation, direct and intense, rather than filtered through, interpreted, skewed, and ultimately diluted. A variation of this understanding manifests itself in the recent turn to “affect”, when it stands for “intensity” (cf. Massumi 2002, 27), the bodily engagement and activation that cognition, meaning-making, and understanding ostensibly lack, or from which is can ostensibly be analytically or heuristically distinguished. The contributions assembled here, however, demonstrate on many levels just how mediated ‘immediate’ experience is, and just how cognized and socially embedded ‘affect’ must be to count as experience.

As Schmitt argues, the wilderness can provide a sense of “*unfiltered* experience” only because it has been “explicitly groomed and maintained by human actions” (p. 130). That is to say, a cultural expectation or desire for ‘intensity’ or ‘immediate’ experience – itself the product of a historical development and conditioning of bodies – is made to happen by a specific arrangement of bodies, spaces, sensory inputs, and objects either put together by people (a shrine, for example) or if not, then into which people put themselves (like an open field or a mountaintop) or get put into by others (say, under water). Experience is inextricably intertwined with doings and sayings.

For some proponents of practice theory, shifting the focus of analysis away from cognitive contents, meanings, and narrations seems to lead quite logically to a shift away from humans as the center of cultural analysis. Interactions take place not primarily between minds (creating intersubjective reality) but between bodies, things, and spaces (and is therefore ‘interobjective’, see Reckwitz 2012). Bruno Latour’s re-assembly of the social (2005) appears in this line of thinking to be the logical next step, which I find somewhat puzzling, considering that Latour’s work frames itself as a break from Bourdieu and builds instead on Deleuzian concepts. In this regard I found Schmitt’s use of ‘folklore without folk’ to be very helpful in making clear how a practice-theory approach can indeed facilitate a perspective on culture which de-centers the mind as the seat of subjectivity without erasing the human altogether. Not only do human bodies interact in specifically human ways with objects (such as walking sticks) and spaces (such as forest trails), but these objects and spaces mediate these interactions to other human bodies, for instance, in the future. In other words, things are social actors, i.e. actors *for* humans, because they are animated by humans and/or bear the marks of previous human interaction with them. This is not to say that the Berlin key is merely a symbol after all, that it only stands for something, but that its efficacy as a social actor emerges through its mediation of human relations toward it in the past. Or as Schmitt puts it: “actions taken by others guide, encourage, and constrain actions taken by the individual” (p. 136) and both of these are mediated through objects, which are animated by those human actions.

What this issue does particularly well is to explore in several arenas the ways that ‘classical’ practice theory will have to be expanded to include digital and virtual spaces of interaction. Buccitelli does this in a straightforward manner, first presenting the ‘classic’ thinker de Certeau and then confronting him with case studies from the area of digital culture. His examples demonstrate an interesting point that González-Martin also brings up, which is often taken for granted in approaches based on practice theory: how transmission takes place. In a strict Bourdieuan model, it is assumed that practices are acquired primarily via mimesis, that the habitus is ‘absorbed’ more or less tacitly (except for the occasional admonition to stand up straight or hold your knife properly, as Bourdieu famously mentions, e.g. 1990, 69). But if ‘communities of practice’ extend beyond the face-to-face into virtual communities online, the transmission will have to be much more explicit and rely heavily on words or text. I will not follow my friends, or (if we compare Buccitelli’s example with Schmitt’s) simply the ‘beaten path’, through the park; I will ask my friends on Facebook to explain the path to me and why they prefer it

and weigh alternatives. How does this affect our conceptualization of 'practice'? How did practice theorists envision the role of print media in the entrainment of habitus, such as etiquette manuals and self-help guides do, of which internet forums now represent the most vibrant version? These questions remind us that, although Bourdieu was keen to emphasize the unconscious, unspoken, mimetic forms of acquiring habitus in an effort to counter the cognitive, rational-choice bias of social theory, practice theory was never meant to completely ignore the role of explicitly transmitted knowledge and verbally articulated pedagogies. Greg Noble and Megan Watkins offer a useful concept, 'agentic reflection' (2003, 530), which captures the ways in which subjects acquire practices, a practical sense, a 'feel for the game' and ultimately, habitus shifts, through explicit and verbal communication, including magazines, videos, and books, as well as by consciously 'mentally rehearsing', imagining, or visualizing oneself with a future habitus (531-2). This approach offers a way to integrate ways of learning into cultural analysis done on the basis of practice theory that do not require bodily co-presence. Likewise, Berger and del Negro utilize manuals with written instructions for members of organizations to explore the interplay of practice and social structure. The irony of studying "policy texts to make a practice theory argument" (p. 157) is not lost on them, yet they encourage us to look closely at the relationship between texts and practices, suggesting that texts represent the "potentials for social action" or perhaps something like the script for a particular performance of practice (*ibid.*), not unlike the scripts that quince-girls are asking for from the online community. The relationship between the individual performer and the collective cache of knowledge contributing to, constraining, and circumscribing the actualization of a particular practice, is a version of the agency-structure duality that practice theory grapples with, as Berger and del Negro elaborate in their article. This duality also lies at the heart of Chatterji's discussion of comic book creations, adapting the agency-structure question to one of artistic agency and the structure of artisanal tradition. Here again is an example of how it is possible to subsume performance under a broader notion of practice, since many of the same issues inhere in both approaches.

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