

ON COMING HOME AND INTELLECTUAL GENEROSITY

Adele E. Clarke
Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences
Box 0612, 3333 California Street, Suite 455
University of California, San Francisco
San Francisco, CA 94143-0612
aclarke@itsa.ucsf.edu

and

Susan Leigh Star
Department of Communication
University of California, San Diego
La Jolla, CA 92093-0503

[NOTE: This paper appeared originally as
Adele Clarke and Susan Leigh Star, Guest Editors. 1998. Special Issue:
Legacies of Research from Anselm Strauss. "On Coming Home and Intellectual Generosity."
Symbolic Interaction 21(4):341-464. Placed on website with permission.]

We are honored to be the guest editors for this special issue centered on work in the tradition of Anselm Strauss. Because a festschrift for Anselm with papers by most of his close colleagues and students was already published (Maines 1991), we have devoted this special issue to work by the "next generation" of interactionists working with Straussian approaches. The one exception is the paper by Isabelle Baszanger who edited a volume of Anselm's collected papers in French (Baszanger 1992a). Because she provides such an insightful and provocative overview of Anselm's scholarly work, Baszanger's introductory paper for that volume appears here in English.¹ This allows us as editors to dwell instead on Anselm's contributions to life itself as teacher, advisor, and friend.

Both of us were Anselm's students during the early 1980s. And, for both of us, finding Anselm and his work was an intellectual homecoming, a long-awaited coming in from the academic cold. We know many others have shared this intense and life-shaping experience, many without ever having met the truly exceptional man who was Anselm Strauss. Some of their papers are included here. We know, too, that for those who did meet him, a fundamental part of this was meeting Fran Strauss--often the smiling person opening the door to a new world. Their lives together were team efforts always, and the wholes were always considerably greater than the sum of the parts.

Before we introduce the papers in this special issue, we want to briefly comment on the breadth of Anselm's connections and the wide international network he and Fran created and maintained down to the last moments of his life, which Fran nurtures still. Anselm was an

exceptionally generative teacher and colleague. His was an intellectual generosity, always available--his own poor health permitting. He relished helping people who were stuck in their work--especially with their (often belated) analysis of (too much) data, often collected without following the first precept of grounded theory: start analyzing immediately!

Anselm taught analysis groups as informal classes, and he met individually with strangers and blocked students alike. He had an oral "cut to the chase" method that worked wonders. Anselm would sit back, get comfortable, bend his head down a bit, peer over his glasses and say, "So, tell us, what is this a story of?" The heretofore mute novice would then use the most familiar of narrative forms to unblock analytic paralysis.

Stories are a special genre. They are not lists of codes or categories. They are not frequencies. They are not decontextualized intellectual objects. Stories cohere. They have threads that get woven together--however unevenly and episodically. Their patterns end up linking codes, categories, themes, and other elements into stories that can become an analysis. Stories are fabrics of life. As such, they are situated in the practical details of everyday life. As Cole (1996, p. 135) notes, "The frequency with which metaphors of weaving, threads, ropes and the like appear in conjunction with contextual approaches to human thinking is quite striking." It is the threads, however sheer or frayed, taut or loose, that matter.

Storytelling is quintessentially loose and informal. Sit back, relax, tell a story, listen to a story. Stories open up spaces and places. New vistas are sighted. New alternative scenarios emerge. Tales are amendable, amenable, friendly. "Stories are neither data nor laws; they can be swapped and disputed by differently situated observers" (Tsing 1995, p. 126). We tell stories for solace, in a deeply familiar mode. One can breathe into a story and let out a sigh of relief. Anybody can tell a story. You do not have to be a high theorist. You just need a place to begin and a place to go that includes some interesting observations.

One of Anselm's great gifts was in listening forth stories. Most everybody, when asked, can tell some kind of story about their data. In the presence of a skilled listener, they can comfortably and informally learn the art of pulling fractured data into analytic codes and categories, producing a new analytic story -- a new coherence. This is, of course, the part that usually strikes terror into the hearts of new students of grounded theory. The magic of working with Anselm was moving past this paralysis with him. Instead of a space of terror, Anselm invited us to play in a territory familiar for most of our lives: the story, the lived experience. Both of us remember joking to get someone going in analyzing qualitative data, "Once upon a time...." It was only many years after first sitting in a classroom analysis group as students with Anselm (and years after we ourselves had been leading such groups) that we finally "got" the stunning power of this, his usual mode of calling us to work.

Anselm's other major strategy was to ask, "So, tell me, what are you working on?" These two questions were asked of people from all over the world. They open conversations. And Anselm was that--an open conversation. When he died and we called people to let them know, it seemed like hundreds said, "But he just emailed me!" as if that fact could somehow make his death impossible.

Anselm was exceptional in how much he relished people taking his work and ideas and running with them in new (often unanticipated and even shocking) directions. He was among the rare scholars who grasp how much of an honor this is, even when those ideas are occasionally mangled. To a serious pragmatist, having your work be useful is delicious--useful, not catechism. It also means letting go of control and trusting in a much more pluralist point of view than that usually tolerated in the academy.

Linked to this gentle pluralism was Anselm's non-directive style of teaching and advising. While he was usually crystal clear about what he was doing and why, he always let his students find their own paths. Baszanger's paper (in this volume) talks about Anselm's struggle with Blumer over his master's thesis and the issue of who would control the final product. Perhaps this experience was key for him in trying to let go of control over his students. The rejection of such control also carries an implicit approval of multi-vocality. Anselm was almost always available to help you think through a problem. But it was your problem; he only helped when asked, and he never told you what to do.

This style bred an intellectual adventurousness among many of Anselm's students that was abetted by his own continual exploration of new worlds. You could never guess what kind of books would be piled on his kitchen table, like a lazy Susan full of intellectual dipping sauces. The range was always breathtaking. He used fiction, biography, history, art criticism, and *The New York Times* as ingredients for making sociology. And he felt in no way restricted by discipline, exhibiting instead the strong tendency to waywardness also common among those who have worked with him.

Anselm took great pride in his own career and in those of his students. But, like most interactionists, he was unambitious in the usual careerist sense of seeking power, money, and feifdoms. His deepest ambitions were fully centered on the intellectual work, and on integrating the doing of sociology with his life work, broadly conceived. His doing of sociology never stopped until he did.

THE PAPERS

Of course, Anselm's contributions live on, to which this special issue attests.² Given Anselm's international life, it is obviously no accident that the papers in this special issue are by scholars from five countries: Baszanger/France; Casper/USA; Garrety/Australia, Strubing/Germany; and Timmermans/Belgium/USA. We are fortunate indeed to be able to lead off this special issue with Isabelle Baszanger's insightfully contextualized overview of Anselm's intellectual project. Baszanger stresses the structural side of Strauss's interactionism. This is, for us, one key to the continuing salience of both his sociology and methodology. The interrelations or co-production of action and structure absorbed Anselm's sociological imagination for decades and gave it a doubled edge that will be incisive for decades to come.

Baszanger's essay is a combination of personal and intellectual biography spiced with quotes from interviews she did with Anselm in 1989 and 1991. Here, she has written some of the stories that were previously only oral anecdotes. Her essay covers the full range of Anselm's contributions to the sociology of health and illness, from psychiatric institutions (in the early

1960s) to the later work on death, chronic illness, and trajectories. She powerfully situates Strauss's web of negotiation/negotiated order and social worlds conceptual frameworks against a backdrop of both European and American medical sociology. As well, she examines Strauss's work vis-a-vis other interactionists, such as Blumer, Hughes, Goffman, Becker, Freidson, and Conrad. As only someone deeply enmeshed in fieldwork could do, Baszanger examines grounded theory and Anselm's mode of thinking through fieldwork per se. Here, we find the consequences of relentless empiricism--looking and listening to the world around him--in his work. She concludes with reflections on the critical space Anselm constructed for himself--his sites of moral and political concern--as an interactionist sociologist.

Anselm left a variety of legacies to his students and, via them, to his "grand-students." He left legacies of imagination, of style, of method, of values, of traditions, of concepts and problems. And these papers reflect them. The most traditional legacy, that of concepts, is richly represented here. Anselm was an inventor of concepts: awareness context, trajectory, body-biography chain, articulation work, and grounded theory. Each of these emerged from a series of empirical studies, usually conducted collaboratively. At some level of abstraction, they were all grounded in pragmatist theory, particularly that of John Dewey, and in dialogue with other symbolic interactionists over a period of many years. Yet there is an enduring originality here, one which links visual representation and metaphor with an eye for the *mot juste* and the telling example from the data.

The trajectory concept, extended in Stefan Timmermans' "Mutual Tuning of Multiple Trajectories," came first from Anselm's experience of colliding time lines, perhaps initially from the studies of death and dying he conducted with Barney Glaser in the early and mid-1960s. The sociological study of dying was then in its infancy. Dying was ringed around with romanticism and taboo and, above all, silence. By observing what actually occurred in terminal wards of hospitals, Anselm and Barney were able to break those taboos and say the blunt truth: dying people do not always die when they are supposed to. The lives of their families, nurses, and doctors are bound up with the process of dying, too, and often those lives are put on hold, sometimes for years, while a person dies. This tangle of trajectories shapes the whole nature of social organization in the hospital ward and in the lives of those affected--the dying and those around them. Of course, in addition to this basic insight concerning the dying situation, there are much subtler observations to be found. Dying is a collective, not an individual process. It entails a lot of work, not just psychologized feelings or idealized religious ritual. And conflicting sentiments commonly co-exist in the same person: impatience and grief, self-concern and other-directedness.

Timmermans takes two further steps in his exploration, both of which have "Straussian" hallmarks. First, he notes that trajectories are multiple. No one travels just one trajectory at a time, and the interaction of trajectories has a complex patterning and hierarchy of mutual structuration. This is a direct extension of Anselm's work on multiple trajectories such as those represented by the body, biography, and illness. At the same time, it furthers both the imagery and the technical accuracy of the idea by offering a sense of the relative power of different trajectories as well as some new concepts about their coalescence (or lack thereof).

A second direction taken in that paper comes from Anselm's legacy of values and style. Too few bridges have existed between the sociology of medicine and the sociology of science and

technology (with some notable exceptions).³ Timmerman's paper makes such a bridge and does so with a kind of lateral thinking that was second nature to Anselm. We all have work to do: patients, doctors, scientists, laboratory animals, and other non-human actors. And while people have trajectories, so too do tools, illnesses, and ideas. Timmermans' extension of these key concepts is a tribute to the Straussian tradition of thinking across traditional conceptual and disciplinary boundaries.

Monica Casper also bridges the sociology of medicine and that of science and technology, but she develops her paper through the part of the Straussian legacy connected to George Herbert Mead. She links Mead's definition of social objects as human constructs (rather than self-existing entities) with Anselm's concerns for the pragmatics of work. Casper develops the concept of "work object" as any material or symbolic entity around which people make meaning and organize their work practices. She then takes this concept into the emergent medical specialty of fetal surgery. Fetuses are obviously rather "hot" new work objects (and sociological topics) sociologically and will continue as such into the next millennium. But Casper also carefully focuses on pregnant women as (often invisible) work objects in fetal surgery practices by attending to the less flashy material elements in the situation as well.

Casper's paper delves into classic Straussian concerns with the social organization of medical work, professional social worlds, the emergence of specialties, and interaction in clinical settings. Here, she explores some of the complexities of the world of fetal surgery by examining three sites of difference: heterogeneous work objects, criteria for patient selection, and views of disease and its treatment. While specific situations are often quite fluid, Casper found a distinctive politics of difference based in the specialty and training backgrounds of actors. Thus, fetal surgery is an emergent and changing negotiated order involving discursively and practically liminal work objects.

Another key set of concepts, those developed from Anselm's social worlds research, is extended and explored in Karin Garrety's article on "Science, Policy, and Controversy in the Cholesterol Arena." The social worlds legacy traces back to Anselm's Chicago School roots, to the work of Park, Burgess, and Hughes on the nature of the complex patterning of traditions, ethnicities, and lines of work that intertwine to form a living city. Park spoke canonically of the city as a "mosaic of social worlds which touch but do not interpenetrate," having as his abiding vision something like Zorbaugh's (1929) community maps in *The Gold Coast and the Slum*. Rich and poor may inhabit the same space, or live literally shoulder to shoulder, but never understand the basic precepts of each other's lives.

This fascination of Park's, carried forward in Hughes' ecological vision of workplaces and their internal heterogeneities, was taken up in turn by their students, such as Howard Becker (1982), Tomatsu Shibutani (1955, 1962), and Strauss's own (1978, 1991, 1993) investigations of the dynamics of settlement, legitimation, fission, and fusion involved in the actions of social worlds. Looking at the larger picture of conflict and cooperation, Anselm became interested in enduring border areas between social worlds which touch, sometimes interpenetrate, and often fight fiercely for resources (both conceptual and material). Sometimes enduring border regions, hosting many conflicting social worlds, become organized into durable negotiated orders--or what Strauss called arenas. The arena concept (Strauss 1978, 1993; Clarke 1990, 1991) was a new unit of

analysis for policymakers as well as those analyzing social movements and social change. Arenas such as alcohol and drug policy, gerontology, and nuclear energy and weapons development are enduring forms of social organization. In addition to decades-long conflicts of interest, they may also host careers, shape governmental organizations, and present their own internal organizational dynamics. Wiener's (1981) investigation of the politics of the alcoholism arena and Clarke's (1991, 1998) study of the reproductive sciences have carried this Straussian legacy forward.

Garrety's paper does so as well, taking the social worlds concept and grounding it firmly in a study of a large, durable arena: linkages among heart disease, cholesterol, and preventive dietary policy recommendations. She, too, links the sociology of medical research and the sociology of science, but from the point of view of policy work. She says of her goals in the research, "I was searching for a theoretical framework which would help me to understand the ongoing, complex interactions through which the controversy was enacted. One of my major aims was to avoid an asymmetrical explanation that assumed the 'truth' of one particular set of claims, while attributing 'false ideas' to the 'distorting' influences of economic and/or political interests" (this volume, p. ???)

The sensitivity to asymmetry is a stylistic heritage, from Anselm and the Chicago school, that all interactionists develop to some degree. No story is inherently privileged over any other, as noted in our earlier discussion of pluralism. In the science arena, this has produced some fireworks with those (many) who do see science as an inherently privileged type of story.⁴ Here, Garrety tells a deceptively quiet and subtle story about how those very privileges are used to structure the cholesterol arena over a period of some decades. Certainty and uncertainty are structural conditions to be negotiated, used as resources, and sometimes bartered. Strauss's negotiations research (including the monograph *Negotiations* in 1979, and extending back in time to *Psychiatric Ideologies and Institutions* in 1964) showed how, in the words of Thomas and Thomas ([1928]1970), "things perceived as real are real in their consequences." People invest in settled negotiations, which then come to have political and organizing power of their own. Most powerfully, Garrety's work does not shy away from the complexity involved in tracing these negotiations over a very long period of time. The problematic quality of the science per se will also intrigue some readers.

Strubing's paper testifies to a quite different sort of Straussian heritage: the application of his work to fields seemingly far removed from the sociology of work or medicine. One "distant" area where Anselm's work has had strong influence is in computer design and research, especially Distributed Artificial Intelligence (DAI, also called Multi-Agent Systems or MAS) and Computer-Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW).⁵ Some of this influence can be traced to bridges built by Anselm's students (e.g., Star and Strauss 1998) with computer scientists interested in modeling complex interactions at work, as Strubing shows.

Several of the problems encountered in building computer systems that will cut across organizational boundaries, yet remain robust in use, are identical to those encountered in the analysis of social worlds. We must model work in sufficient detail to be useful to (those ever so picky) computer systems built to support articulated organizations. At the same time, the systems must account for and allow local variations. This is precisely the problem of constant comparison outlined in the grounded theory method. That is, in doing grounded theory, there is a sense in which we want to achieve the impossible--to simultaneously generalize and situate. We want modest

working concepts that can travel across the boundaries of social worlds as messengers, not imperialist armies! This very problem appears in the nitty-gritty of computer design: how to link disparate sites through a necessarily formal medium, without losing precious local knowledges. Thus, grounded theory is also a strategic problem of design in complex computer systems

Strubing's paper is at the same time a classic social worlds analysis of intersection. He discusses cooperation across disciplinary lines between symbolic interactionist sociologists and computer scientists over a period of years. The common problems of grounded theorizing and computer designing mentioned above give rise to fruitful findings both in sociology and computer science, yet this intersection has never been fully stabilized. The boundary objects (Star and Griesemer 1989) developed by the two lines of workers must carry several types of cross-world interaction, including arms' length relationships and the vicissitudes of funding. Strubing's paper highlights one of the legacies of Anselm's work perhaps least known to sociologists outside the sociology of computing world. It was a source of delight and occasional puzzlement to Anselm that "these computer guys" would find so much of use in his work. The concept of articulation work, for example, is so much a part of the vocabulary of CSCW that it no longer requires definition in technical papers. As Strubing tells the story of the collaboration, the reasons for this are illuminated.

Overall, it is perhaps the legacy of values and style that is strongest for those of us who were Anselm's students and for our students, his second and third generation heirs. A cat-like curiosity and a capacity for patient observation were both stylistic and moral legacies from Anselm. "Study the unstudied" was a maxim we heard time and again. Do not follow the fashions, do not jump on the bandwagons of theory and public debate. Seek instead the untold stories, the quiet contributors, and the modest corners of social life where human suffering is compounded by silence. Pay no attention to the labels on the disciplinary doors bidding or forbidding you entry. Follow the questions, follow your data, and follow your own senses of inquiry and justice.

The import of the work represented in this issue, therefore, goes beyond the reporting of research findings of a certain sort. It is a tribute to a lasting legacy of storytelling, the sort of storytelling that listens and compels, that embodies complexity, and that moves mountains slowly and carefully.

In closing, we would like to draw your attention to the listing of Anselm Strauss's publications since 1990 which appears in our Appendix. His publications before that date appear in his *Festschrift* (Maines 1991, pp. 383-94). In typical Straussian fashion, Anselm has been publishing a lot even since he died! Two recent books are of particular import. First is the edited volume which collects what he thought were his most important papers, *Creating Sociological Awareness* (Strauss 1991). Second is his capstone theoretical statement, *Continual Permutations of Action* (Strauss 1993) which revisits and reframes his thinking on all the major sensitizing concepts which are at the heart of his legacy to interactionism and to sociology. Quite a legacy indeed.

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ENDNOTES

¹ We edited Baszanger's paper quite extensively for an American audience likely to be more familiar with both symbolic interactionism generally and Strauss's work in particular. On Strauss, see also Maines (1991). The French volume has accelerated the development of interactionist approaches there, especially in medical sociology/sociology of health and illness. Baszanger's own work (1992, 1998) contributes significantly to this trend. See also Strubing (1997) for a recent German "translation" of symbolic interactionism.

² See also Kathy Charmaz (1998) who edited the special section of *Symbolic Interaction: A Research Annual* of presentations at the memorial for Anselm Strauss, Toronto, 1997.

³ On issues of bridging between medical sociology and science and technology studies, see Casper and Koenig (1996); Casper and Berg (1995). For interactionist and related examples of bridging, see Clarke (1998), Star (1989), Fujimura (1996), Casper (1998), Epstein (1996), Bowker and Star (forthcoming).

⁴ See, e.g., Star (1995) and Ross (1996).

⁵ CSCW is an area of computer research that includes many sociologists and anthropologists of work, communication and organization (Bowker et al. 1997).