

INTRODUCTION: **Anselm Strauss' Grounded Theory and the Study of Work**

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Abstract: Anselm Strauss was interested in the sociology of work in every sense, and used his grounded theory method to observe and analyze everything he encountered, including his own “medical work.” Drawing on the reflections of his students, this introduction briefly examines Strauss’ everyday work mode using grounded theory. The eight articles in this special issue honor Strauss by using his theories and methods for studying varieties of work in very different settings. The final article in this collection provides selected statements from graduates who had the opportunity to study with Strauss. Their voices reveal how Anselm Strauss influenced their lives and work and speak for the many sociologists he trained.

It is fitting that the project these papers represent began on a hill in San Francisco at the 1998 Pacific Sociological Association Meetings. For those of us who were associated with Anselm Strauss as students and colleagues, our image of Anselm is irrevocably linked to two hills in San Francisco. The first is windy Parnassus Avenue, the hill to which the distinctly urban campus of the University of California at San Francisco clings. Anselm Strauss arrived there in 1960, having taught at Indiana University and at the University of Chicago, where he had earlier received his doctorate. In Chicago, he had directed research at the Institute for Psychosomatic and Psychiatric Research and Training at Michael Reese Hospital, before he was recruited by the University of California to begin a research program in the School of Nursing. A few years later he founded the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences and the Doctoral Program in Sociology. He remained at UCSF until his death in 1996. The other significant San Francisco hill is Russian Hill. It occupies a sunlit position in the heart of the city, and in the hearts of many who associate it with their sociological awakening. It was there in a townhouse on Moore Place that Anselm and Fran Strauss made their home, and to which they welcomed scores of students, colleagues and visitors from around the world.

The warmth and congeniality of the San Francisco sessions, and the subsequent get-togethers of those of us who had been Strauss’ students and associates, inspired the unique character of this collection. These pages evince a mix of research scholarship,

grounded theory application and extension, memoir, and quite a few “stories.” As will be clear to the reader of the interviews with a few of his former students, Anselm Strauss was an exceedingly complex man of great intellectual breadth, personal warmth, and compassion. He was also a man for whom intellectual and personal life were seamlessly blended. As Judith Musick’s remarks and David Hayes-Bautista’s remembrance of a long-ago encounter illustrate, Anselm Strauss lived his sociology and encouraged his students to do the same. Monica Casper marvels that Strauss is remarkable for being “someone with a list of publications as long as a boxcar” who would also stop to smell the flowers or listen to a symphony. And we also learned that while Ans was doing so, *or* reading a novel or biography for pleasure, *or* visiting an exhibit, *or* checking out the news, *he was getting analytic insights*. He demonstrated that comparative analytic insights could come from anywhere in life, and be unusual or mundane, which Carolyn Wiener’s recollection whimsically illustrates. His confidence, or better said, his “self-acceptance,” was unmistakable, and something which his students longed to emulate. He was amazingly down-to-earth for a man who had published over thirty books (more, if one counts the translations) close to 100 journal articles and book chapters, and numerous essays and commentaries. On finishing his doctorate at the University of Chicago in 1945, he emerged in print by publishing more than an article a year, beginning with five papers in the *American Sociological Review* and two in the *American Journal of Sociology* in his first six years alone. The reader is referred to the list of publications in the *festschrift* edited by David Maines (1991), which was further updated in the special edition of *Symbolic Interaction* in his honor edited by Adele Clarke and Leigh Star (1998), and at the Anselm Strauss website at UCSF (www.ucsf.edu/medsoc).

Anselm Strauss was the most unpretentious academic I have ever known. In his nearly sixty years of working and publishing, Strauss advanced symbolic interactionist theory and method remarkably, yet he was soft-spoken and unassuming. His dress and demeanor mirrored his personality. He preferred open-collared shirts and his trademark pullover sweaters to coats and ties, and he was even known to carry drafts of whatever he happened to be working on in a plastic bag—much lighter and easier on the back than a briefcase. He lived most of his life with chronic illness and worked the small necessities of self-care into his daily routine. Totally the sociologist, he used his experiences both in and out of the hospital as data, observations of “medical work” from which he could draw insights. This was a life lesson I took from Anselm: observe what life hands you as data for a sociological analysis. It makes life more interesting, you may improve your analytic skills, and it may even help your situation. Sometimes Anselm needed to take a short rest, and if he were working with students in a seminar, he would give a characteristic, almost dismissive, small wave of his hand and say, “just go on, I’ll be right back.” That might mean his reclining on the bench beside the fireplace in the Third Avenue Victorian (which housed the sociology program) while we went on with our seminar for twenty minutes. Or it might mean his closing his eyes as he sat in his chair, to return to the conversation in a few minutes with a smile and his full attention.

Anselm Strauss was both sophisticated and practical. He was exceptionally witty with a wry sense of humor, and was interested in something about nearly everything going on in the world. He and Fran collected sculpture, paintings and drawings, and were especially interested in the works of new artists who appealed to them. He played

Mozart and Beethoven beautifully at the grand piano in his living room. He was also a man who could set out for Palo Alto by bus to see first-hand the kinds of pressures that his student Aaron Smith was encountering as an overworked social worker on a sick kids' ward. Anselm went to find out what Aaron was up against and to see what he could do to help.

These papers and reflections argue that to celebrate someone as a complete human being, one must both honor the person and advance his work. Great scholarship, like all work, exists in a social matrix, and understanding the character of the matrix enables us to further understand the work and the process of its production. Thus we evoke Anselm Strauss' grounded theory methods even in talking about Strauss and everyday life: the conditions under which his work was done, the social processes involved (and with which his students were involved), and the consequences produced. To understand the character of the scholar and the nature of his relationships with others is not only the savoring of warmly held memories but is *analytically useful*. Anselm, more than anyone, would appreciate that. To pursue such an analysis fully would necessitate a complete intellectual biography; however these reflections by students suggest one route that pursuit might take. (See also Isabel Baszanger's (1992, 1998) essays using quotes from interviews with Strauss in 1989 and 1990.)

When we asked for their recollections, Strauss' former students, now sociologists of every stripe--theorists and researchers, teachers, activists, leaders--quickly volunteered to talk about the ways in which Strauss had made his mark on what they produce, teach, and create and on how they interact and how they live. Given the present assault on higher education (Hohm and Wood, 1998), in which tenure is under attack and increasing numbers of part-time and temporary university faculty members struggle to teach classes at more than one university, we have too little of the integrated academic life. Stanley Aronowitz refers to fully living one's academic craft and exercising one's intellectual freedom as "the last good job in America" (1998:206-207). The implications of Aronowitz' observations are clear. Not only does living such an academic life provide a model for justice in working conditions, it also provides the conditions for good work. Anselm Strauss' accomplishments demonstrate the heights that can be achieved when the intellectual life is integrated with the everyday world.

Five of the eight papers in this collection were first presented in two sessions at the 1998 PSA meetings, titled "Papers in the Tradition of the Work of Anselm Strauss." All either explicitly or implicitly bear upon some aspect of the study of work. As Steve Wallace observes, "Strauss was most essentially interested in the sociology of work, and often used a variety of vehicles, settings and scenes (such as hospitals and clinics) for observing and analyzing it." Thus, these papers seem a particularly good fit with the prefatory reflections on how Strauss went about his own work of researching and teaching. Covan uses the subject of her dissertation research, on the universality of elder modelers working with young apprentices to reproduce culture, to reflect on her own apprenticeship with Strauss some 25 years ago. A current analysis of the transmission of cultural tradition can be seen in Gilmore's paper, in which he shows how the reproduction of culture necessarily involves contemporary work in addition to the preservation of the past. Mueller and Mamo analyze career contingencies of nurses

supervising clinical trials. Wiener takes the Straussian concepts of negotiation, action and social arenas, to dissect the morass of the rationalized hospital, and to examine a contentious policy arena. In focusing on work in two very contemporary arenas, Chatfield examines the essentially social nature of participatory software design, while Christensen and Casper argue that in contested scientific work, much depends on which actors possess the tools to do the job. Montini draws on Straussian notions of interactional work, identity, and awareness contexts to examine gay and lesbian struggles for open disclosure against heteronormative strategies to keep gays from revealing authentic selves. The work of doing grounded theory in a consulting arena is examined in the Lessor piece on consulting with teachers engaged in globalizing school curricula. Finally, Jurich was inspired by Strauss' quiet determination to solve a research dilemma as she grapples with ontological questions raised by fieldwork on the Lakota Indian Reservation. All but two of the contributors were students or "grandstudents," as Clarke and Star have characterized them (1998), of Anselm Strauss. Chatfield and Gilmore were students of Howard Becker, longtime intellectual traveler with Ans. Taken collectively, the interviews and papers represent personal memories, an analysis of Strauss' way of working, a tribute to his theories and the advancement of his thought. We wanted these pages to reflect the work of Strauss and the ways in which his person and his work influenced those who came after. Our vision has been much improved by standing on the shoulders of such a giant.

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and to the many alumni and friends and “intellectual kin” of Anselm’s who attended. I want to acknowledge the late Solomon Davis who chaired one of the sessions, and our sadness at his all too early death in 1999. Finally, we cannot imagine Anselm Strauss without Fran Strauss. They were a team. Anselm dedicated much of his writing to Fran with the expression, “To Fran, without whom...” Thus, special thanks go to Fran Strauss, civil liberties activist, *aficionado* of art and culture, conversationalist, wit, and friend and counselor to dozens of graduate students, to whom this issue is dedicated.

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