INTERVIEW

TEACHINGS OF ANSELM STRAUSS:

REMEMBRANCES AND REFLECTIONS

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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 practically everything he encountered, including his own “medical work.” Drawing on the reflections of his students, in this introduction I briefly examine 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.

This article provides a collection of students’ anecdotes about what studying with Anselm Strauss meant for their lives and careers. Their stories are presented as direct statements rather than refracted through an analyst’s lens. The remembrances these students offer represent the experiences of many more. Their statements emphasize how they learned ways of being in the world from Anselm Strauss as well as Chicago School traditions and tools of grounded theory. The students also address how they act upon these earlier lessons in their research and pass them on to their students. Their stories form a mosaic of memories cut from a looking-glass that reflects the past and mirrors images of the future.

We live in the minds of others and they in ours. But we do so in a particular way. As active beings, we create images through imaginative recall and reinterpretation, rather than passively adopting the views of others. Thus, we impute
meanings and, subsequently, define sentiments toward reflections—both given and received (Cooley 1902). The teachings of Anselm Strauss live on in his students’ memories and imaginations. They reflect a way of learning at once subtle yet transformative and evoke images of a teacher with enormous patience, purpose, and gentle persuasiveness. Anselm’s teachings include a love of knowledge, a world view imbued with theory and made real through research practice, and a fundamentally pragmatist way of being in the world.

The following remembrances paint images of moments often long past but much present in meaning. They also sketch a portrait of a scholar evocative of another age and academic tradition unlike those given in current corporate educational models. How Anselm taught was part of his teachings—immediate, involved, intuitive, and innovative.

Anselm is perhaps best known for creating the grounded theory method with Barney G. Glaser. The remembrances provide glimpses of how he taught this method and present views of his lasting influence on students. This influence began during his first class meeting with the first cohort of sociology doctoral students in 1968 and lasted until his death in 1996. At that first meeting, Anselm interviewed each one of us as though completing a research study. By the end of class, Anselm glowed with as much excitement as we felt. He told us that we were well chosen to embark on this adventure, which turned out to be quite an adventure. After musing for a moment, he chuckled and said with relief, “There’s not a careerist among you.”

My background and relation to Anselm differed somewhat from the students who wrote remembrances. I, too, knew him to be a caring, creative, and committed scholar but at times also a mischievous skeptic, consummate politician, and discerning critic who tested students’ mettle without them realizing it. Unlike most of the students below, I learned grounded theory from Barney Glaser during six exciting quarters of training in qualitative data analysis. In its early years, the Graduate Program in Sociology had several emphases; more students in my cohort pursued urban sociology than medical sociology. Anselm and Barney disdained careerists who masked paltry ideas with political maneuvers; they envisioned making another career path possible through using grounded theory methods. For them, research practice provided the path to productivity. We were to write books, not mere dissertations—and to write them often.

Time, a downsized discipline, and a revised program altered earlier hopes and expectations. The doctoral program shifted to specialize in medical sociology and recruited students from health and human services professions, some of whom have returned to work in these fields. And Anselm’s illness touched all aspects of his life.
The remembrances below reveal a mosaic—rich in images, patterned through enduring relationships, colored with collective events, and shaded by subjective experience. The direct statements that form this mosaic were collected from students’ written responses to several open-ended questions. Their voices resound with sentiments about their recollections of learning grounded theory and reflections of Anselm primarily from the 1980s and early 1990s. They construct this mosaic with pieces of a looking glass as they mirror the thoughts and feelings of many other students.

Knowing Anselm

I went to my first appointment with Dr. Strauss (Spring, 1975) with a list of questions about the program at UCSF [University of California, San Francisco]. I had a decision to make. Berkeley for a master's in Public Health or, UCSF for a PhD in Sociology? This was my first experience with the man who literally changed my life. I had spent the first years of graduate training in a department that was strangling on the split between the politics of the day and its theoretical orientations—Marx and Parsons. I didn’t want to be in such a department and I wasn’t at all sure I wanted to continue in sociology at all. So I asked questions and described in some detail the effect that the theoretical schism and conflicts had on me. It was at that moment, and with a quiet shift in his chair, that Anselm became the interviewer.

I don’t remember what he asked me but I will never forget the feeling I had at that moment. He was interested in what I had to say - about how I saw things. He drew from me one candid observation after another and soon we were both engaged in an amusing and speculative conversation ranging to any number of now forgotten topics. I was utterly and completely charmed. It was my first lesson in "everything is data." This is a lesson I have relied upon many times. Not just in work. I have drawn well from it in raising a son, in forming new friendships, in looking for jobs, and in rebuilding after personal losses. What a splendid way to circumvent a defensive reaction to life’s challenging moments. (Judith L. Musick)

I was a rather impatient graduate student, with a life quite apart from the Department of Sociology: I was Director of La Clinica de la Raza in Oakland during that period (1970-74), and was also organizing the National Chicano Health Organization, among other advocacy groups....After not being around the Department for nearly six months, I had to go to UCSF to pay some fee. As I parked my motorcycle (shades of C. Wright Mills), I spotted Anselm across the street. I felt sheepish, like, when as a kid I would feel guilty about not having gone to church. I was hoping he wouldn’t see me, so that I could pay my fee and make my escape back to the real world. But, he saw me, hailed me, and trotted across the street. I couldn’t escape—I was trapped. My guilt feelings mounted as he came up to me, put his arm around my shoulder in an avuncular fashion, and asked me what I had been doing.
I couldn’t lie to him—who could lie to Anselm about anything? —and began to report on all my extra-curricular activities. Noticeably absent was any mention of classes being taken (they weren’t being taken), seminars attended (none being attended) or school-related activities participated in. I was fully expecting some sort of reproach, perhaps a chewing out and reminder of the seriousness of being a graduate student.

Instead, Anselm held me out at arms’ length to look me in the eye, and said, “You know, that’s one of the things we pride ourselves about in this program...we don’t want to interfere with your real life. Please keep doing what you’re doing.” Then, he excused himself, he had to go to another meeting, turned and trotted back across the street.

I felt relieved; after all, I hadn’t been chewed out. Then, I felt guilty that I hadn’t been tying my two lives together. As a result of that encounter, I changed my dissertation research to a project that fit comfortably with my life, the social dynamics of the first wave of Latino medical students.

Nearly 30 years later, I am still working on the issue of Latino medical student enrollment, still doing grounded theory to develop programs, and still remembering what it felt like to get permission to get on with my life. (David E. Hayes-Bautista)

As I am working on the SI [symbolic interactionist] chapter [for a theory textbook], which I wonder if I should have taken on, I am writing with a strong sense that Anselm would have supported my efforts. In some important ways, he is still very present in my life and his presence is very positive. He wanted us students to take risks, to go out and do research, and supported us with his faith that if we paid enough attention to those we studied, involved ourselves deeply in our analysis and writing, that we would do successful research and make a contribution. (Kathleen Slobin)

**Learning Grounded Theory**

Among the many things that I gleaned from learning grounded theory from Anselm, [of] paramount [importance] was how to be a serious scholar without taking yourself too seriously--how to be conscientious about the work and still maintain humor and perspective. Meeting with him to discuss data never became a pressure to produce brilliant insights. The relaxed setting he induced at Moore Place led to conversation that could go in any direction. Often I did not realize that we had produced some good work--until he challenged me to go home and write a memo! (Carolyn Wiener)
More than anything else, Anselm impressed upon me, in his quiet, non-insistent but ever-persistent way, to look for the “story” in the data. While I studied with him, I used qualitative data to mine for the “story”. However, as my original training was in the “hard sciences”, and as I have returned to quantitative research, I have another venue for applying his lesson... [W]hat makes the numbers come alive is that I look for the “story underneath the numbers”. (David E. Hayes-Bautista)

What stands out most to me about learning grounded theory—or anything else for that matter—from Anselm Strauss was his insistence that you own your own work. He absolutely refused to tell us what to do. At the same time he was patient far beyond the call of duty in terms of helping us (and half of the rest of the world it seemed, as we met new faces at Moore Place all the time) think about what needed doing. Eliciting from us what next, where next, how next—always keeping the momentum of discovery/construction going. This was his important lesson for us. And it is a lesson about the integration of one’s work with one’s life. Good grounded theorizing emerges from good grounded practices and reflexivity. And he certainly had those down pat. (Adele E. Clarke)

When Anselm was in class (or in his office) working through the analysis of some data, one of the tools that he always used was diagramming. As people would talk about conditions, processes, and consequences he would draw what the emerging pattern was on a piece of paper so that you could visualize the resulting relationships. Since he was especially interested in processes, this made for a particularly rich and evocative way of understanding the data. I hadn’t thought of it before, but this is one of the limits with the current craze over computer-assisted qualitative data analysis. The computer can help you pull data together around concepts and relationships, but I think it tends to lead one into a more static view of social processes than a good diagram suggests! (Steven Wallace)

[I learned] automatically to think comparatively...I recognize more now the deep thread in Chicago School sociology that Anselm managed to convey brilliantly -- [to] think laterally, to strip away occupational/local jargons, to think in terms of commonality and stretching across cases....

It’s not easy to describe how it feels to have your habitual way of thinking shaken up and reformed (just ask William James). As I’ve become a teacher of grounded theory, one thing that stands out (in retrospective reconstruction, a la Mirrors and Masks) was how gently and how invisibly this process took place. Small reformations and revolutions [occurred] over a period of many years. Now, taking and making visible that process to students is a formidable task. I often only have ten weeks with them...[not] four quarters of GT [Grounded Theory], often not even one.
But I still go directly to the student’s data, and everyone participates...and that static electricity I remember from Anselm's classes still charges the air. (Leigh Starr)

Although I spent two years in the Grounded Theory seminar...I don’t remember much of the process. It was, like Anselm, subtle and nuanced. I have many more vivid memories of images that bring forth entire vignettes of learning grounded theory. Just a few: Ans is at the head of the conference table surrounded by all his devotees...and the graduate nursing students. We, the groupies, jostle to sit next to him so that we can see the diagrams he makes and the notes he writes as we discuss our data. Are we getting it right??? We’re so insecure.

[Another image:] I’m working with my dissertation data. It isn’t happening for me. I have pages and pages and pages of “musings” and I don’t have any idea if they are analytical, or not. I call Ans. “My ship is sinking,” I tell him. “Bring your data over,” he tells me. I pack everything up. I make lists of what I want to talk about. I arrive and Fran serves cookies and tea. Ans says, “Tell me what’s going on here.” I begin to launch into my frustrations, but he cuts me short and says, “no, what’s going on in your data?” He never looks at my data, or hears my list, but miraculously I leave refreshed analytically. Several weeks later, I call Ans. “The ship is no longer sinking. Now it’s rudderless on a vast ocean!” “Bring your data over.” We repeat the process complete with Fran’s cookies. (Lora Lempert)

I remember the free seminar format in which students were encouraged to be at the center of the learning process: we talked, we argued, we would come to few resolutions, and then Anselm would say something that would focus the issue. During the course of what became many semesters, we brought in our research, we read our memos, we shared our problems, and all of us pushed our perspectives before being called back to basics by Anselm’s questions: What is going on here? What are the main issues--the key categories? And their properties? Now, let look for dimensions. What is this situation similar to? Why not use a far out comparison...to a birthday party? Such questions, answers, discussions filled in the content of the seminar. Something always came from what at times appeared to be nothing....The seminar was an eminently social process--structured by the principles of grounded theory, and continually emergent. (Kathleen Slobin)

I recall one particular afternoon that I spent 4 hours at home with Anselm....I shared with him some of the experiences I had encountered with mothers and their critically ill newborns in the neonatal intensive care nursery at Stanford University Medical Center.... Anselm praised my enthusiasm about these infants and their families and the detailed observations I had recorded and remembered so well. And then, he started raising the following questions with me: What do you really see going on here? What are these women doing and why? You know something is happening -
what? You see something happening - what is it? Take it deeper, broader than what you already know. He excused himself -- leaving me to ponder these questions. When he returned several minutes later, he returned to his questions and our discussion became more animated; he was obviously pleased with my beginning ability to grasp his messages. His messages were usually very subtle and you really had to think critically and probe for what he wanted you to experience.

That afternoon with Anselm developed in me a beginning awareness...[of] a flow of events that occurs over time that explains change. [I also realized that] as you work with rich data, analytic interpretations and discoveries will sharpen your observational skills. You must constantly check your numerous observations and emerging ideas....

Anselm taught me the value of memos as evolving process that changes in content and expounds upon previously written memos....[He said] that the value of my memos depended upon my ability to order them in the logical order they emerged. Consequently, the process could be visualized and...show the emergent data in preparation for analysis....He would critique my memos and ask me to follow his analysis of the emergent data. His notes to me seemed so logical; he stated often the data was there, I needed to learn how to recognize and locate their relevance. I used his notes often as reference points on my own journey toward analytical efficacy. I continue to value those moments...and only hope that I am creating similar kinds of relationships with my students as they embark on their professional journeys. (Aaron Smith)

Recollecting Anselm Strauss's Teachings

One of the best things Anselm taught me is to value and appreciate innovation—not unevaluatively but as a means of growing, improving things, ideas, concepts, theories, approaches. Anselm looked to the future and not to the past. Only recently have I come to realize how rare this is as we age, perhaps especially among people who were successful in the past, perhaps especially among academics. Anselm always wanted to make his and others’ contributions better, not merely bask in their praise.

Anselm especially liked people taking his work and running with it in strange new directions. He was always curious about what people had done with grounded theory, though not always particularly impressed. He knew from the inside out that when you put something like GT out into the world, the world will do with it as it pleases, rather than necessarily pleasing you. He lived comfortably with such potential difficulties in ways that are deeply impressive to me. He was always engaged, but also always letting go, keeping moving, keeping on. Keeping the momentum going with Anselm also meant learning to avoid the disease of premature or terminal
attachment—to codes and categories and theories and ways of doing things. Staying analytically open while theorizing relentlessly was the paradoxical space where he helped us learn to dwell. Ultimately, theoretical sensitivity is about directionality rather than a final analysis. Keeping on going....(Adele E. Clarke)

Even in a group of several students, Anselm ...[gave] the impression that he was “listening” and “hearing” everything you said and did not say. He was very intuitive, and he always created a safe environment for each student to promote his or her opinions without fear of ridicule. This did not mean that you could “snow” him over with ad libs especially when you did not follow through on assignments and contractual agreements to get some task accomplished. Those of us who misread his demeanor were also quickly reminded that his awareness context was truly intact.

Anselm taught by example and metaphor....When I started in the doctoral program, I worked full-time and supported a family and aging parents. My classes were early mornings and late evenings. However, I did not have total support from my agency for doing doctoral studies. On several occasions I missed classes because of pressures on the job. I talked to Anselm, who volunteered to ride the train in from San Francisco to Palo Alto to visit my agency and “discover” for himself, the sources of my problems. Upon his arrival at my agency, I took him on tour of our facility where he met my various supervisors and co-workers. When he returned to San Francisco that evening, he informed me that he had “discovered” my problem and he had created a solution for me. He had contacted each one of my classmates, informed them of my problems, and they all agreed that we could start my evening classes an hour later than scheduled so I could attend my evening classes without conflicts with my work schedule. I will forever be grateful to Anselm for his generous extension of himself on my behalf. When I considered the physical effort that it took, the time and expense of that trip, I knew that Anselm was special, once-in-a-lifetime teacher and friend. He was that and more. (Aaron Smith)

His teaching was very loosely formulated. He didn’t appear to worry about whether students were doing the work, but depended on students’ personal motivation. Yet, he took students seriously, and if asked, would spend hours working with a student and their work in one-on-one sessions. Not infrequently, he would invite a student to his home for focused work, and typically held at least one seminar a semester at his home during the evening. These home sessions were important in presenting Anselm’s involvement as a whole person in his teaching and research, while also giving students a view into his other interests: music (the grand piano), art (the African masks and sculptures as well as the many contemporary prints and paintings on the walls), plants (the azaleas on the balcony) and, of course, books in his office, on the stairs, and throughout the living room and kitchen. By inviting
students home, Anselm modeled his life and provide a deeper, sometimes unspoken, look at who he was. (Kathleen Slobin)

Anselm was one of the most gentle, unassuming, kind, and helpful scholars I ever worked with. He had no artifice, no posturing, no bombastic celebrity-lust; just a love of sociology, concern for his students, and a deep engagement with so many aspects of the social world he peered out at through those big glasses. Anselm seemed to me to be somebody deeply in love with life, somebody who--despite a publication record as long as a boxcar--would take time to stop and smell the flowers or to make time for a symphony. (Monica Casper)

He left it up to his students to engage, or not. He never tried to convince us of the importance, or the viability, or the legitimacy, or the validity of Grounded Theory. He knew. He figured we'd get it, or not. Some did, some didn't....Anselm taught me, or perhaps gave me permission, to trust my analytical instincts. He was always ready with an intellectual embrace. (Lora Lempert)

[I learned] to value listening rather than talking, hearing rather than imposing categories. [I discovered his] sublime gentleness, but like acupuncture, directed toward exactly the spot where the energy was moving. Listening. [I learned about ] respecting students' biographies and selves as much as their work - and knowing that the two can't be separated. Learning to improvise, and like all improvisation, that [meant] relying on a complex repertoire of codes, performances, as well as creativity and courage.

I was his student for almost 20 years -- I say student because I always learned from him. During his last months, we wrote a paper together, and even though he was very tired most of the time, he could put his finger immediately on the weaknesses in the argument, or suggest in a sentence or two how to think comparatively and richly. We were writing about invisible work, and one of things he did was quietly to say, "what about the mindless repetitive work in the concentration camps? What was being produced? A death was being produced" -- which led to an analysis of purposes, identity, and power. He suggested a passage from Toni Morrison's Beloved to illustrate who gets to define power relations. (Wait a minute -- I was supposed to be the feminist in this duet!) (Leigh Star)

**Legacies of Anselm Strauss’s Teachings**

Anselm was always interested in what we, as students, had to say and how we saw the world around us. Through conversation, he made us colleagues and from there -- that place of mutual respect -- he taught us. But I have a confession to make: I seldom was able to fully hear what Anselm said. My late husband, Frank, used to
describe this phenomenon as "mis-underhearing". Not a real word but certainly
descriptive of my usual experience with Anselm. At the time, I was convinced that I
had both a hearing deficit and an intellectual one. Now, I am not sure. Anselm would
talk and ask questions of my field observations or theoretical insights. He spoke so
softly that I would miss key words or phrases. I was shy to interrupt. So I listened
harder - never really sure that I fully understood his observations. I would repeat what
I thought he said, he would comment, I would try to integrate, he would comment,
and on and on. (Judith L. Musick)

[I recall] the audacity with which he approached comparative analysis and the
value of what he called "blue sky ing." Who else -- as he did during our medical
technology study -- would think of comparing a CAT scanner to a toaster or washing
machine in order to tease out the properties and dimensions of hospital equipment?
(Carolyn Wiener)

My proudest moment was when my research methods students presented me
with an award (we had a department roast and graduation celebration) for "Best
Storyteller." That's how I learned to teach, and that's what Anselm said he found
most effective -- one day very early in his teaching career he stopped lecturing,
walked around the lectern to sit on the table in front of it, and just started telling
stories. (Nan Chico)

[I take] joy in being a Grounded Theorist. I love this work and I genuinely feel
sorry for those colleagues who don't get it. Their loss. Intellectual curiosity.
Mucking about in what's really going on, what's below the interactional surface, what
story(ies) the data tell. (Lora Lempert)

I have taken these lessons along with me into my own teaching of the
qualitative research sequence at UCSF since 1990. It is arduous and refreshing,
tedious and stimulating, but ultimately always provocative. I have learned that
theory/method/substance are actually nonfungible, no matter what we title the
courses. [Syllabi available upon request.] For me, and I argue for Anselm, GT is
epistemologically and ontologically rooted in and nonfungible from symbolic
interactionism. This is what Leigh Star (1989) calls a "theory/methods package", each
not only presupposing the other but constructed through the other. Of course, this
complicates teaching grounded theory a tad. Keeping on...

I have also begun working on a new kind of grounded theorizing, attempting to
take Anselm's work around the postmodern turn. In it, I am attempting to avoid
pitfalls created by the positivist leanings of early grounded theory, and also to
incorporate---really to integrate and feature---postmodern concerns with differences of
all kinds. What I am proposing is a new approach to grounded theorizing which
supplements seeking basic social processes (and I think these are usually multiple) with analyses of positionality. This creates grounded mappings of particular terrains laid out in the data in which multiple heterogeneous positions can be elucidated along whatever axes are specified as relevant in the data. One study would likely have many maps as well as processes. Difference--range of variation--which GT was always superb at specifying, is thus made central rather than analytically marginalized. This to me is the central feature of the postmodern turn. Again taking Anselm’s appreciation of innovation to heart, I am trying to develop ways to use these mappings to analyze visual materials and cultures, as well as historical and textual materials, social worlds and arenas. Keeping on...

Anselm’s generosity of spirit grows more impressive to me with the passing years and my growing understanding of what such generosity means in terms of time, energy and commitment. I see that generosity as a heritage that many of his students, including the editors of this special issue, are preserving through using, through creating new practices of doing grounded theorizing, doing symbolic interactionisms, doing sociology. I think Anselm would be proud. Keeping on... (Adele E. Clarke)

I try to teach [my grounded theory students] to love the world around us because even though it contains pain, it also contains beauty and rich complexity, and I try to teach them in a nonjudgmental, gentle way that emphasizes their gifts. In my research, Anselm is always present whether he’s steering me toward a particular question or topic, or making me ask questions about "what's going on here?" (Monica Casper)

[I learned] to be interested in student’s learning and research projects even if I thought I was entirely bored by the title and content. This [comes] directly from the comparative method. Not doing too much for the student, but being ready to be gently tough when it’s needed.

[In regard to research, I learned about] ignoring disciplinary boundaries, just ignoring them. [I gained] confidence in my own questions. [I recognize the] deep anthropological strangeness that comes from comparative thinking and analyzing dimensionality. [I’m] keeping the incredible energy that comes from open problem solving. Impatience with flavor-of-the-year social movements within social sciences and cultural studies. An affinity for much of the older literature, always seeing the value in e.g. early Chicago style sociology. I once did some archival research at Chicago and read Anselm's Master's thesis (by the way it was pretty awful) among many others -- but all had insights, all struggling with the combination of empirical and formal, open and having a point of view....
Finally, I still think about what it meant to work with an established scholar, in the last part of his career, and one who so shunned the spotlight and academic politics. Of all the people I know, I consider that I had the most rewarding grad school time possible. No degradation rituals. No imposition of advisor's framework. Letting my questions be "my" questions. In teaching my analysis class a couple of weeks ago, one of the students indignantly stated, "You should be able to say the words dildo and hegemony in the same tone of voice." I think Anselm would have gotten a good chuckle -- and how he loved to chuckle -- over that. For a moment I thought I sensed him in the room. (Leigh Star)

Reflecting upon a Lasting Legacy

The mosaic above tells something of a life of an extraordinary teacher and scholar. Like any biography, time, circumstance, and relationship frame the images within this mosaic. Then too, these images are drawn in recollection and shaped by reflection. Remembrances are selective. They are not simply reproductions of the past. Rather, they are creations of a past shaped by the experienced present and its meanings (Mead 1932). Who Anselm was and what learning grounded theory meant to each student varied accordingly. Anselm was all things remembered and more.

Still, these students' voices echo resounding themes. They speak of a man who gave them respect and treated them with compassion. Anselm acknowledged students' tragedies and losses and celebrated their joys and victories. These students tell of a teacher deeply engaged with discovering fresh ideas, and of one who offered them freedom to think independently and to garner the courage to follow their ideas. By the 1980s, Anselm may have let students learn grounded theory at their own pace, or not learn it at all. But in the early years, Anselm and Barney remained more assiduous in their efforts. Not only did they attempt to have each student "get it," they also thoroughly enjoyed bringing scholars from other traditions into the fold and converting them to grounded theory. It didn’t always work but they expressed much pleasure in the attempt, and no doubt the teamwork involved. And there was always another potential convert dropping by...

What was remarkable about Anselm’s teaching was his uncanny ability to draw theoretical insights out of his students as he involved them in new ways of seeing. For Anselm, the world held ever-present possibilities of knowing; data resided anywhere and everywhere. Nonetheless, it took a way of seeing to observe their significance as Aaron Smith learned. Discovering the story in the data gave students a new perspective on it, and a means of turn facts into a story of acts, as David Hayes-Bautista relates. Using hypothetical comparisons made the implicit properties of a process explicit. Writing memos about ideas gained from the data captured them in
time and, moreover, charted the student’s developing analysis. Lessons may have come slowly but they lasted.

Anselm’s sociology provides a uniquely American view. It is rooted in pragmatism, nurtured by empiricism, and developed through interaction. Action always occurs within a context. Social life consists of processes. Everyday actions, negotiations, interpretations create stable social structures; they do not merely exist. Actions give rise to reconstructing meaning; in turn, meaning and symbol inform action. Pragmatism permeated Anselm’s very existence. His legacy includes bringing Mead, Dewey, and Pierce to empirical life through story, method, and metaphor.

Not only did Anselm leave a legacy of scholarship, but also he served as an exemplar of how to grow intellectually while years accrue and health declines. Seldom do scholars accomplish so much even in a long twilight of their careers. Anselm started a graduate program at an age when many academics plan their retirement. He remained curious about the world and revitalized by it at an age when many academics bask in the glory of their early works, as Adele Clarke suggests. The scenes unfolding around him became opportunities for discovery and theorizing. He charted new research visas and explored the terrain surrounding his chronic illness while living it and simultaneously used his experiences as data to gain analytic insight.

Anselm’s enormous productivity reflected his tenacity, yes, but it also resulted from an exacting sense of priorities, and a life exquisitely ordered for sustained work. True, he let some things go but, from my view, that was a skill well learned. Sometimes easy, sometimes not. An occasional aside, murmured doubt, or rhetorical question revealed the struggle that letting go could entail. As he let some things go and distanced himself from others, he built enduring relationships. Collaboration and colleagueship provided touchstones for building projects and for constructing fresh ideas. None of it would have been possible without the care of Fran Strauss. Anselm alluded to the pivotal role she played in the acknowledgments of Chronic Illness and the Quality of Life (1984 p. x), “And without Fran, neither this book nor quite literally, the first-named author…”

As he grew more frail, Anselm displayed remarkable ingenuity in bringing the world into his life. He turned his lively curiosity about students’ lives into windows for seeing and knowing the world through their eyes. They brought him the stories, the data everywhere he no longer could pursue. Beyond data, Anselm also maintained contact and connections through students and colleagues. He retained interest in the national scene in sociology but remained distant because he needed to attend to more important, more immediate goals. I could expect to hear from Anselm after the annual meetings to relay news of people and politics.
Anselm left a lasting legacy in finding joy in doing, learning, working--theorizing. He surely took to heart the pragmatist view of action as giving rise to meaning. His scholarship was founded in action—the everyday research practice that sparked ideas. And research in one area evolved into new research questions waiting to be answered in another. Anselm discovered adventure in research, shared ventures, and in both limited and lasting friendship, all managed within the confines of his physical endurance. He learned to live in a frail state for years—decades beyond standard 1970 prognoses for his diagnosis. By letting go, keeping life in perspective, finding pleasure in small moments, and staying focused, Anselm maintained direction, remained productive, and continued to inspire generations of students.

Anselm’s legacy resides in his students as well as in his writings. The man and his life continue to touch their lives and to shape their work. They experience his influence directly when they recognize him speaking through them, catch themselves adopting similar metaphors, construct diagrams and wonder if they resemble his, and hear his voice as they read and reread his books. Their remembrances and reflections attest to myriad ways through which he inspires and instructs them. Remembering Anselm brings forward a mosaic of multiple reflections of the past to recreate a mirror that allows us to glimpse possibilities for the future.

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References
Mead, George Herbert. 1932. The Philosophy of the Present. LaSalle, IL: Open Court.


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1 See the Anselm Strauss website at UCSF through the Social and Behavioral Sciences site: www.ucsf.edu\medsoc.

2 I am indebted to Katarin Jurich for help in rewording the ending paragraph. Personal communication, June 27, 2000.