Chapter 7

The institution as the analytical unit of culture

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Comments are welcome.

Abstract
Following suggestions by anthropologists, (Tylor, Malinowski, Benedict, and White), social psychologists (G.H. Mead), sociologists (Goffman and Berger and Luckmann), and philosophers (Ricoeur and Cassirer), I propose a characterization of the anthropological concept of culture using the institution as the fundamental unit of cultural analysis and show how this characterization can address a number of serious problems associated with the classical characterization of culture. The first part of the paper examines eight major problems inherent in the classical view: analytical units; integration; discreteness; language; continuity; organic whole; pragmatics; and origins. The second part introduces the concept of the institution and how it works. The third final part shows how the institution can, in a comprehensive way, overcome of serious flaws in the classic concept of culture. The article concludes with a discussion of how this concept opens up a new set of interesting analytical questions.

Introduction

In reviewing the literature on signing apes I came across an article entitled “Do animals have culture?” by Laland, and Hoppitt (2003). What struck me was not their claim that animals have culture, but their relatively weak characterization of this concept.

Cultures are those group-typical behavior patterns shared by members of a community that rely on socially learned and transmitted information (Laland, and Hoppitt 2003:151).

This definition is incomplete, not wrong. Culture is “socially transmitted” as opposed to genetically transmitted. It is also true that culture consists of patterns of behavior that are shared by group members. But what is crucially missing from this definition is a characterization of what these “behavior patterns” are and how they work.

Given this definition, one would have to conclude that animals do have culture because, for example, feral chimpanzees learn to build nests and fish for termites by imitating their mothers.

The Laland-Hoppitt paper focuses on the manner of knowledge transmission. Consequently when they ask “what (if anything) is unique about human culture?” they conclude that humans differ from the other apes by the quantity, and not the quality of culture they possess, though they suggest that humans may have developed a better mechanism for culture transmission “in a manner than favors ever more

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1This paper arose as a derivative of a larger project, a series of essays on the process of “becoming human.” In these essays I discuss this evolutionary process as the interaction between our physical form (physical anthropology), language (linguistic anthropology), culture (cultural anthropology) and the increasingly complex self as the agent behind this process (psychological anthropology). For other essays in this series visit http://www.msu.edu/~dwyer/Dwyer%20Papers.html. A key area of focus is the role that language has played in becoming human.
culture” (158). The only thing said about the properties of culture is that they consist of “group-typical behavior patterns.”

Laland and Hoppitt can be excused because as biologists they are looking for a term that represents patterned behavior that is not genetically transmitted. For anthropologists, for whom the concept of culture is the foundation of their field, more is expected. However, as I began to investigate the anthropological concept of culture, I found that this concept, as it has evolved in the field of anthropology, suffers from a lack of precision similar to that found in Laland and Hoppitt.

For example, Edward Tylor (1871), an early English anthropologist, introduced the concept of culture with the following words.

Culture, or civilization, taken in its broad, ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.

While more explicit than Laland and Hoppitt, this definition, nevertheless, leaves the impression that culture is a haphazard collection of items with little or no internal organization.

As the field of anthropology grew, one would expect both a greater precision and a near consensus among anthropologists on the concept of culture. But when Kroeber & Kluckhohn (1952) examined 164 definitions of culture offered by prominent social scientists during the 1930s and 1940s, they found that most definitions consisted of listings of essential properties, much like that of Tylor’s 1871 definition, though with a bit more detail. Kroeber & Kluckhohn sorted the properties offered by these definitions into 14 features. While they found a number of common features in these definitions, they also found little consistency across the definitions. For example, 90% of the definitions mentioned no more than five of these fourteen features, and rarely did any two of these definitions use the same collection of features.

But even more importantly, I found almost all of the definitions to be problematic, and this situation has not changed significantly since Kroeber & Kluckhohn carried out their survey. Although, most of these problems have already been noted in the literature, typically, these problems have been raised and resolved ad hoc-ly and not comprehensively. In this paper, I propose to address each of these problems using the same theoretical framework which is based on institution. This framework has been constructed from pieces drawn from various sources including anthropologists, like (Tylor, Malinowski, Benedict, and White), social psychologists (like Mead), sociologists (like Goffman and Berger & Luckmann), and philosophers (like Ricoeur and Cassirer). Part I reviews eight problems that concerning the concept of culture; Part II presents what I mean by institutional culture; and Part III concludes with a discussion of how this concept resolves the problems raised in Part I.

**Part I: Questions about the concept of culture**

*What is culture?*

A definition of culture needs to be more than a characterization of the subject matter of the
7. The institution as the analytical unit of culture

antropology. In addition, it needs to be capable of addressing the criticisms that have been raised concerning current formulations of the concept.

Why are there no analytical units in anthropology?

One of my anthropologist colleagues used to speak admiringly of linguists because they had basic units like the phoneme, the sentence and the morpheme as a framework for their analysis, because, according to him, there were no such units for the study of culture. As a result, he concluded that anthropology was doomed to a pre-scientific stage of investigation. As pointed out above, most definitions of culture list properties of culture, but with a few exceptions, they do not mention the existence of analytical units.

How do the various components of culture fit together?

One of the problems with a definition based on an inventory, such as Tylor’s knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, etc., is that it fails to specify how these features fit together. How can we account, as Burger & Luckmann (1967) ask, for the social distribution of knowledge? Is knowledge a general feature of culture, as most definitions suggest or can we be more precise?

Are there discrete boundaries between cultures?

While we have no difficulty in considering Canadians and Japanese as belonging to different cultures, we are likely to pause when it comes to Americans and Canadians, because the two groups share so many similar features, as do Northerners and Southerners in the United States. In the latter case, some consider Northerners and Southerners to belong to the same culture, but different subcultures. But presently, there is no criterion that can tell us unambiguously whether we are dealing with two distinct cultures or two varieties of the same culture. If such a criterion exists, what is it? Alternatively, if there are no such criteria, and consequently no discrete cultural boundaries, how do we characterize differences between two societies? Fairclough (1989) raises this question when he points out the continuities between different ethnic groups living in Soweto, South Africa.

What is the relationship between language and culture?

Kroeber & Kluckhohn noted that very few definitions include language and symbol use. Those definitions which did consider language as an essential property of culture basically left it at that. White (1949: 625), for example, noted that “… articulate speech is the most important and characteristic form of symbolic behavior:” and that culture is “dependent on the exercise of a mental ability, peculiar to the human species that we have termed symboling” (White 1949a:363). However, White did not explain how the symbol and why articulate speech was so essential to culture. Bloomfield (1945: 625) did suggest that language did function “as the bearer of a culture.”

During the period of Kroeber & Kluckhohn’s collection of definitions of culture, the role of language as an enabler of culture rarely appeared. Furthermore, because the role of language was not appreciated by Kroeber & Kluckhohn, it does not appear as a prominent category in their analysis. Those citations that include the symbol do not appear in the section on language. And while they cite the German philosopher Ernst Cassirer’s Essay on Man (1944), they ignore his discussions of the symbol as the crucial mechanism that transformed humanity such as the following passage, reminiscent of Mead’s thoughts in Mind, Self and Society (1934), which clearly states how language
has transformed humanity.

Obviously this world forms no exception to those biological rules which govern the life of all the other organisms. Yet in the human world we find a new characteristic which appears to be the distinctive mark of human life. The functional circle of man is not only quantitatively enlarged: it has also undergone a qualitative change. Man has, as it were, discovered a new method of adapting himself to his environment. Between the receptor [response] system and the effector [stimulus] system, which are to be found in all animal species, we find in man a third link which we may describe as the symbolic system. This new acquisition transforms the whole of human life. As compared with the other animals, man lives not merely in a broader reality; he lives, so to speak, in a new dimension of reality (Cassirer 1944:24).

While I find Cassirer’s (and Mead’s) explanation incomplete, it does represent a serious effort to explain the relationship between language and culture.

Is the human experience qualitatively or quantitatively different from other species?

As mentioned above, because Leland and Hoppitt’s (2003) definition was narrowed to the nongenetic transmission of knowledge, they had to conclude that the difference between humans and the other apes is quantitative and not qualitative. Other scholars like Cassirer (above), (Mead (1934), Benedict (1934), Berger & Luckmann (1967) and Geertz (1973) have argued that humans live in a qualitatively different world. If the cultural world is qualitatively different, it is important, to move beyond the mere claim and show how this world is different.

Is culture an integrated organic whole?

Several definitions of culture have asserted that culture is an organic whole, functioning like a biological organism which has several organs that carry out different functions necessary to that organism’s survival. This led to the functionalisms of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown who held that the components of culture function organically to meet the needs of its members. The neo-evolutionary approach of Steward (1955), White (1959) and Sahlins (1960) argued analogously that culture was an additional mechanism for adaptation. Here again, assertions of integration and adaptation need to be backed by explanations as to why this should be so. These explanations also need to account for the fact that some components of some cultures dysfunctional? And finally, if these components do not form an organic whole, then why, as Berger & Luckmann ask, do they appear to hang together?

What is the relationship between structure and agency?

Throughout the 20th century, the predominant view has been to focus on language and culture as structure. Although scholars like White (1949) and Street (1993) did view culture as a process as opposed to a static entity, they did not clearly show where the agent fits in. Ricoeur (1968), Giddens (1979) and Bourdieu (1977), among others, have criticized this view that language and culture are merely structure and have pointed out that without a concept of individual agents using culture, we cannot understand either how cultures change, maintain themselves or originate. We also need to ask who this agent is and how is it constituted.

How did culture evolve; did it emerge instantly, or in stages?
7. The institution as the analytical unit of culture

Without a clear definition of culture, it is impossible to answer the question of what evolved. For example, did earlier forms of culture consist of quantitatively fewer amounts of knowledge, practices and beliefs or were they qualitatively different? We also need to address the question of how culture developed. While Kroeber & Kluckhohn and later pragmatists like Bourdieu and Berger & Luckmann point out, human activity resulted in the production and reproduction of culture, the question remains of what kinds of activity were involved and how did it generate culture?

What is the role of the self in the concept of culture?

The psychologist, G.H. Mead (1934) accorded the mind a special place in the concept of culture when he noted that the mind consisted of two components, a self-centered “I” and a cultural “me.” For Mead, the “me” represented the social self, which contained what Mead called “a society in miniature,” by which he meant that the urges and impulses of the “I” were channeled by the restrictions of the “me” into socially acceptable behavior. Mead also saw the importance of roles and role playing by children as the mechanism by which humans acquired a complex self. Although anthropologists (e.g., Sapir, Benedict and M. Mead) explored this concept of the self from the position that every culture has its own personality, they did not suggest that the self is a key component enabling culture.

In his 1949 presidential address to the American Anthropological Association, Hallowell (1950) picked up on G.H. Mead’s concept of the self and suggested that it was an important part of the cultural equation. In 1963, the sociologist, Erving Goffman introduced the concept of face and the importance of maintaining a public face for the consumption of others and quite distinct from the private self which hid behind this public face. In 1987, the philosopher Daniel Dennett proposed a succession of stages in the ontological development of self-awareness which begins with self-awareness, and evolves to an awareness and interest in what the other knows and the realization that others act on the basis of what others know, and finally to a stage of self consciousness that arises when one discovers that others also have an interest in the self. This last stage, not only leads to the division of the self into a public and a private self, but to the awareness that other humans are beings quite different from other beings and can be treated as equals. More recently the importance of the self has reentered anthropology as shown in the work of Fessler (2006) and Hrdy (2009).

Part II: The institution

Miller (2008) points out that there are two types of institutions, those are organizations and those which are not. Language is an example of nonorganizational institution. The institution which I discuss below is organizational.

A short history of the institution

These questions about the concept of culture are not new. As I have shown, different scholars have addressed each of them, but with different and often contradictory explanations. In this paper I propose to answer these questions using a framework based on the concept of the institution. The short history below shows that scholars have entertained the concept, either overtly or tacitly for some time.

Within sociology, institutions are defined by their purpose which is seen as regulatory and functional. and by the five universal areas of social behavior they address: kinship, governance, economic,
7. The institution as the analytical unit of culture

religion and the transmission of knowledge. In contrast, as is shown below, I define the institution as consisting of certain properties, field, goal complementary roles, duties and requirements and legitimations. This allows institutions to be empirically discovered and not predefined. In addition, this formulation does not limit the institution to specific predetermined functions and does not limit the institutions in any given society in number, size and function. In contrast to the sociological model, I see the institution as a form of social contract in which members gain through participation, although this is more so of just, as opposed to corrupt, institutions.

Malinowski is best known for introducing the concept of functionalism to the field of anthropology; however, he also proposed that society consists of “a series of organized systems of behavior, or institutions, which provide the most satisfactory units for investigation in field work” (Murdock 1943). Institutions are commonly thought of as large formal organizations like a school, a government or a banking industry, but for Malinowski the institution was more inclusive to the point where “the collective life of any society… is largely manifested in a series of organized systems of behavior, or institutions, which provide the most satisfactory units for investigation in field work” (Murdock 1943). His other important contributions to the concept of the institution include the recognition that 1) an institution involves the cooperation of its members, 2) each institution imposes duties and responsibilities on its participants, 3) each institution has its own equipment (artifacts), 4) each institution has a unique purpose, and 5) function.

Because Malinowski was criticized for his emphasis on the organic integration of institutions and his functionalist position that every institution functions to meet the individual needs of its participants, his concept of institution was underappreciated. Nevertheless, his concept of institution shows many of the key properties presented in this paper.

Berger & Luckmann (1967) introduce the process of institutionalization which arises out of cooperative face-to-face interactions that develop to accomplish such routine tasks as greetings, housework or hunting. They point out that by habitualizing this activity, participants no longer need to think about how to accomplish a given task each time it arises, they just do it. Thus an institution begins as a cooperative, but ad hoc solution, for an everyday task. As such it need not be the most efficient solution, but merely effective. They say very little about how larger institutions like classrooms or a university evolve, though it is clear that they are built from smaller ones.

Berger & Luckmann’s most important contributions to the concept of institution are its pragmatic origin and consequently that reality is socially constructed. In addition, they have pointed out that specialized knowledge, both practical and theoretical, is associated with a given institution. Their work goes on to talk about a society of a collection of institutions and the development of integrating legitimations that unite the collection of individual institutions.

While Berger & Luckmann do characterize the development of an institution as a cooperative activity, they do so in a very mechanical way. For them, institutions develop almost unconsciously; “institutionalization occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors” (1967:54). This characterization suggests that the members of an institution do not voluntarily enter the institutions, but are drawn into them as a matter of habit. Berger & Luckmann also fail to show how an institution with its generic roles could have evolved from an ad hoc “reciprocal typification” between two individuals. For generic roles to develop, the individual
relationship between two individuals would have to be adopted by other sets of individuals.

Berger and Luckmann do make the important point that that world or institutions through which humans live is a reality which they themselves have constructed.

The institutions are there, external to him, persistent in their reality, whether he likes it or not. He cannot wish them away. They resist his attempts to change or evade them. They have coercive power over him, both in themselves and the sheer force of their facticity, and through the control mechanisms that are usually attached to the most important of them (1967: 60).

Numerous authors have pointed out the existence of social roles, though little is said beyond that. For example Turner (1997: 6) includes the role in his definition of an institution consisting of “a complex of positions, roles, norms and values lodged in particular types of social structures and organising relatively stable patterns of human activity with respect to fundamental problems in producing life-sustaining resources, in reproducing individuals, and in sustaining viable societal structures within a given environment.” Harre (1979) notes that within the institution, social practices and practical goals are assigned to individual roles. “An institution was defined as an interlocking double-structure of persons-as-role-holders or office-bearers and the like, and of social practices involving both expressive and practical aims and outcomes.” (Harre 1979: 98):

Bourdieu’s (1977 and elsewhere) use of the term of field shares many of the properties I attribute to the institution. Bourdieu’s particular contribution was the recognition that the field was a space for competition and where one could work to acquire capital be it linguistic, symbolic or even monetary. This contribution, like that of Berger & Luckmann clearly shows the dialectic between structure and practice.

This short history has pointed out that the concept of institutions in social life is not new at all. It has also shown that while the components like role, field and goal have been mentioned, few details are given. In what follows I show that once the components of the institution are elaborated, and that once this is done, it becomes clear that virtually all of human interaction takes place within a network of institutions.

The philosopher, John Searle, in his *The construction of social reality* (1995), focuses on what he calls “institutional facts.” One would think that this analysis would draw heavily on the concept of institution, but he does not. There are no definitions or descriptions of the institution and the index does not even have a heading of institution. Nevertheless, he does characterize the institution as “invisible structure” and his comments about institutional facts are consistent with the description offered below.³

**Institutional components**

Along with proposing the institution as the fundamental unit of culture, I also suggest that virtually all

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³ Being a philosopher, Searle does not draw much from the sociological and anthropological literature, which is no doubt why none of the other thinkers in this section are included in his work. Not even Berger and Luckmann’s earlier work which contains the same words in a different order (*The social construction of reality*)
human activity takes place through institutions. As such the institution provides not only the basis for understanding the concept of culture but for the analysis of culture as well. Individual agents achieve their goals through acting out the institutional roles to which they have access. Each institution consists of the components of field, roles, goals, practices, knowledge and discourse which are elaborated below. While there is a tendency to think of the institution a fairly large unit, like a national government or an elementary school, my definition includes the very small, such as a greeting, or small talk, as long as it has the properties given below.

**Field.** Every institution has a domain, or a field (Bourdieu 1977) like an academic field (the field of anthropology) or a field of play (a football field). On this field agents meet to play out their roles. When two agents meet, one of the things they often negotiate is which field they will be playing in.

**Roles (players).** Every institution has at least two complementary roles. Each role constitutes an office held by an individual agent. Roles can be symmetrical or asymmetrical: For symmetrical roles, the goals, duties, knowledge and discourse are identical for each role and for asymmetrical roles they are different.

All symmetrical roles are cooperative and positive, meaning that agents in each role benefit more or less equally from participating. Some asymmetrical roles are also positive meaning that agents in each role benefit from participating, although in this case, the benefits are different. Asymmetrical roles can also be exploitative, meaning that one role provides its agent substantially more benefits than the other.

Because the term *exploitative* “has so many political and emotional overtones that the use of this term will hardly facilitate communication” (Galtung 1969), I use the adjective *negative* to identify exploitative institutions and the term *positive* for cooperative institutions.

We acquire institutional roles in different ways. Some are assigned to us at birth (child, woman, American), while others are chosen by the agent (Democrat, volunteer), and still others are earned (doctor, priest, senator) often after the applicant has acquired the requisite knowledge (Bachelor of Arts) or carried out a specific task (Al Hajji).

**Goals, benefits and capital.** Within a field, the roles are assigned specific goals. The teacher is to teach and the student is to learn. By achieving these goals, the agent acquires immediate and capital benefits. Immediate benefits directly meet an agent’s needs while capital benefits can later be converted into immediate benefits. For example, the teacher gains honor and an income; the student receives knowledge and a degree. Honor can be converted into a salary increase; income can be converted into immediate benefits. Likewise knowledge and a degree can be converted into a job which provides income. Different institutions provide different types of capital though some institutions may share the same capital.

The individual agent also has immediate personal needs like hunger, thirst, love, which are not institutionally based, but as the individual becomes socialized, these needs become attenuated by the institutions in which they participate, so, for example, hunger involves both what and how to eat and love involves whom to love. From the individual agent’s perspective, institutional goals and individual needs are fused into one body of general needs.

**Knowledge.** Following Berger & Luckmann (1967:1), I take knowledge, to be “the certainty that phenomena are real and that they possess specific characteristics." This definition is broad enough to
include empirical knowledge as well as beliefs. Berger & Luckmann also recognize that knowledge is socially distributed with respect to a given institutional role, a given institution or a collection of institutions. Each role has specific responsibilities and restrictions, and may be required to possess specialized knowledge. Much of this knowledge is procedural (Ryle 1949) or “how to” knowledge such as how to do something such as hit a baseball or teach a class, or speak to your employer. Declarative knowledge is verbal knowledge like that found in an encyclopedia or taught in a class room.

Associated with each institution is knowledge about how the institution operates and why it exists the way that it does. Beliefs and even facts often blend with a world view about the nature of things, e.g.; people are good; other people are bad but we are good, everything is part of a greater scheme.

Knowledge and world view can be hegemonic, with no alternative viewpoints; more frequently, however, two or more different world views compete for prominence in the same set of institutions, typically between a more highly valued orthodox (official) view and unorthodox, even heretical, view.

Practices

As suggested above, practices required by an institutional role constitute a form of knowledge and accordingly practices follow the same types of distribution as other types of knowledge.

Discourse. An order of discourse (Foucault1966, Fairclough 1989) is associated with each institution and involves duties (how to speak-styles), restrictions (what can and cannot be said), specialized knowledge including grammar. Bourdieu points out that “speech acts” (Austin 1962) fall within the domain of the institution.

Institutional orders

An institutional order (Burger & Luckmann 1967:64) concerns the organization of institutions within a society. An institutional order may consist of a rich collection of institutions or a modest set. We can imagine a newly formed refugee community in which basic coping institutions have yet to form or early human societies in which institutions are just beginning to develop.

The perspective of the institutional order raises questions about how institutions fit together. An institution can connect to another through a hierarchy or a network. For example, the institutional set of classroom, school and school system represents a hierarchy. The institutions in this hierarchy are also complemented by web-like affiliations. For example of classroom teachers are affiliated with teachers’ unions, the school is affiliated with, intramural sports organizations, and the school system is affiliated with school boards and local governance. In addition, the same greeting, itself an institution, may be used in several institutions in which there is a superior and an inferior role – between teacher and student, shop owner and employee, and a CEO and support staff.

The institution of a language or a language variety (dialect) is often shared by many or even all institutions within a given society. It is possible, however, to imagine a society in which each institution has its own language (or variety), as is often the case in religious institutions. Money is shared by several institutions; in fact, the purpose of money is to provide a system of capital that can be shared by a number of different institutions.
Colonization is another type of institutional order in which one institution imposes aspects of its goals, capital, knowledge, legitimations, practices, and discourse on another. Dwyer and Dwyer (2005) examined the national security state as a collection of institutions and were able to demonstrate the ways that the national security state had colonized aspects of the institutions of education and the law.

Institutional orders also deal with the question of institutional boundaries. One can imagine a situation in which for a given society, all members share the same institutions and that these institutions are unique to that society. This situation conjures visions of an isolated village deep in the wilderness somewhere with virtually no contact with the rest of the world. Although in reality most societies, even small-scale ones, interact and share a good number of their institutions with other neighboring societies.

Frequently an institution is distributed either more narrowly or more broadly than the boundaries of a given society. For example, some institutions are found only in a subset of a society like beauty parlors, secret societies and social dialects. However, many of these institutions (the university, the Catholic Church, the tennis match) are part of a subset within a given society and are often found in other societies.

The more that the institutions of an institutional order share a common boundary, the more that order will be seen as an entity to which members can identify, to the extent that they can say, “I am a Canadian, a historian, or a girl scout.” Members of these societies will see their institution as hanging together, even though as Berger and Luckmann (1967:63) observe, “there is no a priori reason” that they should, for an institutional order is merely a collection of institutions that have entered a given society from a variety of different sources. However, for members their institutions do hang together because they have created devices (rituals, symbols, and explanations) that give this collection of institutions this sense of unity.

These rituals, symbols and explanations, can become quite elaborate, and can draw on the supernatural (one nation under God) that have ordained this institutional order or the special relationship that the order with morality and values (with liberty and justice for all). In addition to making the institutional order “hang together,” these rationales also serve to legitimize the institutions that comprise the institutional order and heighten members’ awareness of the institutional order.

Because rationales are created to explain the institutional order and its practices, they require that members believe certain propositions like the order’s supernatural origin or its fundamental morality, even though these rationales may be at odds with the society’s practice.

These rationales also lead to a world view which informs its members on how to understand the world. Because a world view legitimizes institutional practices, it also serves as a guide to (moral) conduct, and a way of evaluating the behavior of others, both within the society and outside. Outsiders may be viewed as uncivilized and inferior. Insiders, who do not live up to the expectations of the world view will be seen as misfits, traitors or worse. Often, world views are hegemonic, meaning that there is

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4 Berger and Luckmann (ibid) attribute the developing of this unifying knowledge to the belief by the socialized individual “that his social world is a consistent whole.” Because symbolically interactive humans have the capacity to reflect on institutions as things they will invent mechanisms of unity through myth and symbolism.
virtually no tolerance for a competing world views. But more frequently there is some measure of competition for the orthodox view, and with it a struggle to maintain or replace it.

**Types of institutions**

Despite the claims of Foucault and Bourdieu that all institutions are exploitative, I prefer Malinowski’s position that many institutions are cooperative, meaning that each participant benefits more or less equally, though not necessarily in the same way. Furthermore, I propose, following Berger & Luckmann, that cooperative institutions are more fundamental because, as I argue below, positive institutions evolved from cooperative agreements in which each party understands that by agreeing to work together, each stands to gain more than acting individually, while negative institutions evolve from the corruption of positive institution.

This agreement between two parties to cooperate reflects Proudhon’s (1851) version of *the social contract* which is in contrast with the narrower, classical view of Hobbs, Rousseau, and others who considered the social contract to be between the individual and the state.

However, institutions can and do become negative meaning that one party gains more and at the expense of the other. Nevertheless, the exploited party may still agree to participate because it sees that there some benefit to be gained through participation. This may be because refusal to participate may have unpleasant consequences such as gaining nothing as opposed to gaining something, social disapproval or even punishment or because something is better than nothing.

**Efficiency.** In negative institutions some of each agent’s energy is spent opposing or maintaining oppression. Oppressors will endeavor to maintain their privilege using legitimation, control of knowledge, force, and threats and use of violence, including annihilation. The oppressed will struggle to improve their situation, to the degree that they are aware of their exploitation. Resistance to exploitation involves a number of strategies including creativity, disobedience, nonparticipation, sabotage, and revolt.

Because some of each agent’s energy is spent resisting or maintaining the negative institution, it follows that negative institutions are less efficient than positive institutions in providing benefits and that this inefficiency correlates with the degree of negativity of the institution. In fact, some institutions, when viewed from the perspective of efficiency, become a liability to the society as a whole, even though individual agents may not object because of their own personal benefits and others may not be aware of it due to or ideological considerations. For example, a society may commit substantial sums to build a military to provide the society with “security.” However, because this commitment draws resources from other institutions (education, infrastructure, health care), the society’s infrastructure deteriorates.

**Power** has to do with the ability to impose control on individual agents. It derives from several sources: the privileges and restrictions accorded to the institutional role; capital, including knowledge that individual agents accrue while acting out individual institutional roles; habitus; and the creativity of the individual agent. Power has both positive and negative qualities. In a positive sense, although

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5“… economic power lies not in absolute wealth but in the relationship between wealth and a field of economic relations, the constitution of which is inseparable from the development of a body of specialized agents, with specific interests…” (Bourdieu 1977: Chapter IV).
the power of a role that restricts what an agent can do, it also enables that agent to achieve his/her goals and benefits. In a negative sense, the power can be a form of violence if it prevents agents from “achieving their potential” (Galtung 1969). Thus, positive power is associated with positive institutions and negative power (violence) is associated with exploitative institutions.

Human interaction in positive institutions is nonviolent. When we go about our daily activities such as parenting, work, shopping, school, or commuting, we do so through cooperation and the exchange of capital. Even in negative institutions our interactions are generally nonviolent. While it is true that violence attracts our attention, it does so because it is unusual, rather than normal.

**Justice and legitimation.** Agents participate willingly in positive institutions because they recognize its justness. If they do not recognize this justness, they will not participate willingly. Because negative institutions lack the egalitarian foundation other rationales arise to legitimize their existence. Such legitimations invoke a number of strategies to convince participants that the institution is legitimate. Leman-Langlois (2002) classifies these as: “moral (this institution is good…); theological (this institution is ordained by god); practical (this institution is the best, fairest way to govern); etc.” They can also draw on scientific knowledge; for example, one can point toward genetic differences between male and female to justify gender discrimination. **Ideology** is the study of the use of knowledge to legitimate negative institutions. This can come directly from the legitimization of a given institution or from world view.

**Formality** is a measure of the degree of rigidity of the role definitions. In some institutions, as in a church liturgy, the agent must utter a prescribed text without variation. In others, as is often the case in friendships, the individual agents have considerable freedom in what they can say and do. The greater the formality, the greater will be the institutional power.

**Examples of institutions**

One of the remarkable discoveries made by the anthropologists Fortes and Prichard (1940) was the interconnectedness of human societies. They reported the extensive interrelationships between different groups of pastoralists and farmers in East Africa; Lowie (1920) did the same for the Native American plains society.

The university exemplifies both the hierarchical and network associations of institutions. At first blush, the university appears to be a hierarchically organized set of institutions. It is governed by a board that instructs the

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6 This explanation differs from that offered by Berger & Luckmann who suggested that legitimations are needed when an institution is inherited by subsequent generations who do not have access to the story of its origin and development. Without a history of its origin, rationales (legitimations) are offered to justify presence and form of the institution.

7 Leman-Langlois (2002: 81) describes this “legitimating discourse” as “the institution’s internal logic or rationale, where its goals, methods, and principles are articulated in harmony with prevalent norms and may be presented as ‘right’ (or lesser evils) or ‘good’ (or the best possible) to the concerned social groups.” Legitimations are necessary in exploitative institution, because “without this understanding . . . the institution has no social imperative.”

8 The term ideology began (de Tracey 1801 and Mannheim 1936) began with a neutral sense similar to my use of world view in this essay. Subsequently it has taken on a more negative. Marx (1845-46) restricted the term to only those legitimations that justified class distinctions.
president about how to carry out its business which includes both non academic domains such as facilities, intramural sports, budget, fund raising and academic concerns under the supervision of the provost who is concerned with student admissions, registration, grades and transcripts, special centers such as area studies and of course the academic departments. Each college funds and supervises individual departments headed by a chair whom it appoints to administer the affairs of the department including student records, recommendations for tenure and the faculty who teach class, write papers and grants and supervise graduate students.

However, there are also institutions that cross cut this hierarchy. The university, the college and the department all engage in fund raising, arranging for classroom teaching, supporting research, grant and paper writing, meetings of faculty. Each department shares an academic discipline, be it anthropology, medicine or urban planning, with its specialized knowledge, literature which it shares with other such departments, both nationally and internationally, the latter being similar, but different in institutional structure such as classrooms, teaching, faculty structure and tenure. Faculty members belong to other institutions as well; they have families, friends, hobbies and community commitments, all of which involve institutional participation.

Friendship is also an institution where the roles involve mutual obligations on the part of each friend. An institution of friendship is a component of every human society but the set of obligations for the role of friend vary considerably from one society to the next. For example, a colleague of mine from Nigeria in West Africa now lives in a Midwest town in the United States. She had befriended numerous American friends including a family who lived over an hour out of town. The family planned a holiday trip to Florida. Because the plane was scheduled to leave early in the morning, the family decided to stay in a motel near the airport the night before. Unfortunately they found that all the motels were filled, so the family decided to return home and rise early the next day to make the trip to the airport. When the Nigerian heard about this, she wondered what she had done to offend her American friends.

For Americans friendship involves not imposing on friends, lest one lose a good friend. For this reason, the American family found it unthinkable to spend the night at the Nigerian’s home. This they thought would be a huge imposition, especially because of the number of number of people involved. On the other hand, the Nigerian thought that in order to maintain a friendship, it was necessary to impose upon and be imposed upon. She interpreted the lack of imposing to be a sign that the friendship was failing.

Institutional practice

Institutional practice shifts the focus from the analysis of pure structure to the perspective of the agent and how the agent sees world. This is where culture is acted out. The agent, as the holder of the role, is the connecting point between structure and practice. The role is structural and defines the liberties and constraints for the agent filling the role. From the agent’s perspective, institutions are the means through which the individual meets one’s needs, as Malinowski pointed out.

Continuity and change. Although not always obvious to the agent, institutions are capable of change. As Bourdieu (1977) and Berger & Luckmann (1967) point out, it is the institutionally mediated activity of the agents (production) that renews the institutional structure (reproduction). It is also through the creative activities of these agents that can lead to innovative activities that can lead to institutional
change. In some cases, an agent may strive to improve institutional benefits by modifying practices to achieve greater efficiency. Agents may also endeavor to improve their privilege at the expense of other roles which is how exploitative institutions arise.

Habitus, the ingrained habits acquired by the agent as a result of frequently participating in an institution (Bourdieu 1977), helps to explain why institutions can maintain their stability. Our ability to use a grammar, our reactions to certain types of behavior, our automatic extension of the right hand for a greeting and the desire to maintain face (Goffman 1963) are examples of habitus. Because habitus is a learned, automatic response, it lessens our awareness of the institutions which guide our lives.

Institutional management has to do with how the individual works with the institutions available to him/her. For example, when more than one institution is possible (teacher/student versus friendship), the negotiation of roles is often the first item of business. A student may try to negotiate a friendship relationship with his or her teacher in hopes of getting a better grade, while the teacher may try to maintain the teacher-student relationship to avoid the appearance of favoritism.

**Part III: How an institutional analysis overcomes the questions associated with the concept of culture.**

*What is culture?*

Having defined the institution, we can now say that culture consists of the collection of institutions used by members of a society. Even though frequently found in definitions of culture, the term *society*, like *culture*, is often left undefined, like that offered by Tylor. The most common usage of this term, and one that is consistent with dictionary definitions, is that a *society consists of a group of agents who interact with one another*. A society is not a naturally occurring entity, but something that comes into being when we define it, be it a bridge club, a football team, a school, or the American people.

*Analytical units*

The concept of the institution not only clarifies the understanding of what we mean by culture, but it also provides a unit of analysis and a framework with which to analyze societies. Analysis can involve identifying the properties of individual institutions including knowledge practice and discourse, how institutions fit together, or whether they are positive or negative including legitimizing ideologies and world view. Analysis can also involve the institutional practice of power, the acquisition of capital and privilege. From the perspective of the agent, one can investigate how the complex self emerges, how humans acquire institutional roles and an understanding of institutions and how institutions evolve and change.

*The integration question*

The institution is the device by which Tylor’s cultural components (knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, etc.) are integrated. Thus, we can expect to find these properties to be associated with a specific institution or a set of integrated institutions.

*The discreteness question*

Although institutions are discrete units, cultures and societies are not. As defined above, a society consists of a group of people who interact. What constitutes a society depends on our definition of it,
be it on a neighborhood, a city, a group of peace activists or medical practitioners. A change in the
definition results in a different society. Accordingly, the culture of that group also depends on how the
society is defined and is thus not an absolute unit. Rather than talk about a specific culture, such as the American culture, I prefer to talk about the culture of the American society which consists of an
assemblage of interrelated institutions, some of which are shared with other societies and some which
are not.

The language question

The term symbolic interaction involves both semiological signs and their use to interact with others.
Lexical signs, more commonly known as words, are the building block for sentences which can be
atactic (one word), paratactic (two word) or syntactic (Dwyer 1986). Atactic sentences allow us to
name things making them more tangible. In addition to naming things and actions that are part of our
natural world, we can name things of our own invention, including institutional roles. Through
naming, roles and institutions acquire a concreteness similar to naturally occurring entities. Thus once
named, these socially constructed entities become objects upon which we can reflect and ponder and
consequently manufacture legitimations for them and explanations as to why a particular set of
institutions hang together.

Words also allow us to imagine alternative worlds including utopias and future events and we can even
imagine our own demise. Words also allow us to extract abstract qualities like color, size and shape
from the things that we have named.

When signs are used interactively they allow for the objectivation of one’s feelings (subjectivity) and
the sharing of understandings (intersubjectivity) which involves not only the sharing of
understandings, but the knowledge that these understandings are shared. Thus symbolic interaction
gives us a greater understanding of what the other feels and knows and what knowledge and
understandings we have in common.

Symbolic interaction also provides the ability to direct the attention of others to a particular item or
activity, even one that may not be physically present and thus to link different experiences in time and
space including the afterlife.

Symbolic interaction is essential for the development of the institution (see the origins question) and
for the development of the complex self, that is, a self with a private and public component. The
complex self emerges from the process of objectivation beginning with the self becoming aware of the
subjectivity of others and followed by the awareness that others are aware of the self’s subjectivity,
that is self consciousness. This self-consciousness in turn leads to the division of the self into a private
(secret) and a public component. In addition, both intersubjectivity and the awareness of the other lead

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9 The terms semiological and sign come from Saussure (originally 1916). In American usage, the symbol is equivalent to Saussure’s sign. However, because the word symbol can also mean a sign that functions as an emblem: e.g., the flag is a symbol of the nation, I follow Saussure’s usage.

10 The awareness of one’s own death leads to the human construction of terror shields including the construction of an afterlife (Berger & Luckmann 1967: 105).

11 The term objectivate means literally to make into an object. Linguistic signs are manufactured objects, as are tools. To objectivate one’s subjectivity thus means to make one’s feelings and understandings into objects (signs) and when this is done, others have access to them.
7. The institution as the analytical unit of culture

to the discovery of the other as an equal, and it is the concept of equality that is the foundation for the social agreement.

Of great interest today is the empirical question of the degree to which symbolic interaction, as well as socialization, has affected symbol-using apes. Savage-Rumbaugh et al (n.d.) have suggested that these processes have transformed these apes substantially along the lines suggested in the previous paragraphs, and offer many amazing examples of the behavior of signing apes in support of this claim. However, in my review of this and other reports of signing apes (including Fouts 1997; Savage-Rumbaugh 1994; and de Waal 1905), I have found only hints of institutional roles in the area of mother-child and friend-friend relationships, but not enough to consider these apes to be using institutional roles. I have also found that signing apes do show self consciousness as evidenced by the use of secrecy and ornamentation (lipstick, clothing, masks) and that they show evidence of negotiating with their human keepers.12

The continuity question

The thesis of this paper is that humans do live in a qualitatively different world from other beings and this is because humans interact with other humans through institutions. This is what Benedict (1934) meant when she said that “no man ever looks at the world with pristine eyes. He sees it edited by a definite set of customs and institutions and ways of thinking.”

The organic whole question

By definition culture is not an integrated organic whole. Rather, what we call culture consists of a collection of institutions. While I agree with Malinowski that institutions arise to meet the needs of the individuals, institutions can also erode so that the benefits of the institution are not fairly distributed. An institution may even decay to the point where it serves a small minority thus becoming a liability of the society as a whole. For this reason, we cannot say that institutions are necessarily adaptive. Furthermore, to impose a claim on adaptivity would predict that all societies succeed, and that citizens need not worry or make an effort to improve them, for societies do “collapse,” as Diamond (2005) puts it.

Although the institutions of a society do not form an organic whole, they do appear to “hang together” (Berger and Luckmann 1967:64). Because as things that can be reflected on, agents can manufacture narratives that provide an explanation of how the array of institutions of a given society “hangs together.” These explanations may involve stories of origin, supernatural beings, or scientific theories.

The structure/agency question

“The relationship between man the producer, and the social world, his product is and remains a dialectical one” (Berger & Luckmann 1967:61). While the term dialectical possesses multiple meanings, Berger & Luckmann mean that both entities, man the producer as agent and the social world as structure have produced the other. Interactive and coevolution are other terms used to describe this relationship. Ricoeur (1968) and Bourdieu (1977) have also recognized the dialectical relationship between structure and agency. What I have added is that the contact point between

12 In this essay, I have only been able to touch on the questions of what language can do and how language has transformed sign-using apes. These topics are addressed in another paper entitled “The consequences of symbolic interaction.”
structure and event is the role when it is filled by an agent.

The origins question

When culture is understood as a collection of social institutions, the origins question shifts from how and when did culture arise to *when and how did social institutions arise?* While agreeing with Berger & Luckmann (1967) that the genesis of an institution begins when agents interact face-to-face, their explanation that institutions arise from the “reciprocal typification of habitualized actions” is unconvincing, because this characterization suggests very passive agents who unconsciously allow institutions to happen. Alternatively, I see positive institutions evolving from social contracts which are intentional agreements made by individual agents because they understand the advantages of participation in the agreement.

Symbolic interaction greatly assists in the process of making contracts for it enables a greater mutual understanding of the duties and responsibilities of the contract and the indication of whether one intends to participate. The contrast between signing and nonsigning apes is striking in this regard. Nonsigning apes show the ability to develop alliances particularly in the male dominance hierarchy (Goodall 1971 and 1986), while signing apes readily make agreements with their caretakers (Fouts 1997, Savage-Rumbaugh et al n.d.).

Although contracts are possible using atactic and paratactic grammars, they are greatly facilitated by syntax because participants can develop a richer (intersubjective) understanding of the terms of the contract and allows participants to (re)negotiate these terms and why they intend to (or not to) participate in the agreement.

Contracts and institutions have many common features. Both have complementary roles with complementary responsibilities; both require specialized knowledge for agents to fulfill their responsibilities; and both require a justification of legitimacy. The primary difference between contracts and positive institutions is that contracts involve individuals and institutions involve generic roles. Thus the transition from the contract to the institution involves the replacement of individual role with the generic role. Institutions have the advantage over the contract in that they do not have to be invented each time they are used. For example, rather than negotiating anew with someone about who will gather the firewood and who will tend the fire, including a specification of what duties and responsibilities are involved, two agents can simply say I’ll be the firewood collector and you be the fire tender.

Both hunting and fire tending are attested in the Middle Paleolithic and both reflect the use of cooperative agreements including the complementary roles of chaser/killer or fire tender/fuel collector. Over time individual contractors would adopt best practices for these common activities. Once this happened, all that would need to be negotiated would be which role each party would take. And when this happens the contract becomes an institution.

During the initial stages of institutional development, institutionalization would have been partial, meaning that not every interaction with the other would have involved an institution. This situation contrasts with our present-day world which is largely, if not entirely, viewed through an institutional lens.

*What role does the self play in culture?*
Having recognized the centrality of the agent in the process of institutionalization, and hence culture, we need to ask what sort of person this agent is. We saw above that the self is complex in two important ways. First, the self is a self-conscious self, aware that others are aware of what it does. This leads to a partitioning of the self into a public (Mead’s “me”) and private part (Mead’s “I”). Second, this leads to the awareness that other humans are like the self and very different from other beings. Thus the other is regarded as a unique equal.

These two properties stand as enablers to the development of institutions in two ways. First, the awareness that the other is fully equal opens the door for social contracts, which are in turn the precursors of social institutions. Second, the public self, Mead’s “society in miniature” is where the agent’s institutional roles are placed. Without this development, institutions cannot arise which is why the public self is a necessary precondition for the acquisition of institutional culture.

But there is much more to the self. For example, agents have an urge to create a positive face, including self adornment and a desire to interact with others symbolically, even though they may have nothing essential to communicate. Human agents have a strong sense of institutional loyalty, and patriotism is but one example. By reintegrating a concept of self into our concept of culture, we can gain a much better understanding of what it means to be human and how culture works. In addition to developing a richer understanding of the agent as a self, we can, from an evolutionary perspective, ask how this complex self arose, and from an ontogenetic perspective, how and when do humans develop a complex self in the process of their socialization.

**Part IV: The institution as an analytical tool**

This concept of institution offers a new set of analytical questions having to do with the structure of the institution, the types of institutions and their legitimation, the relationships between institutions, and institutional practice.

**Institutional Structure**

By elaborating details about institutional components (field, goals, type of capitol, roles, knowledge, practices and discourse) we can gain a better understanding of individual components and how they fit together. Of particular interest is the analysis of discourse. Bourdieu has pointed out that the felicity conditions required for Austin’s *speech act* take place within a specific institution. This is also true for other dimensions of discourse. For example, the distribution of social dialects, and different speech genres, what can be said and how it can be said, are clearly institutionally based. There are even situations, typically religious or class or cast-based, which require a different language altogether, including religious languages.

**Institutional Orders**

The analysis of the types of institutions and their interrelationship can addresses issues of how a society works. Within a society, how do institutions fit together? What institutions exist entirely within a society and which ones span several societies? Are there world views that unite a society’s collection of institutions? What kinds of interrelationships (hierarchical, network, colonial or parasitic) are possible? Multi-institutional studies can also look at the types of capital that are associated with each institution and see how they are converted into other forms of capital.

In a U.S. university a Ph.D. in physics has more value than a Ph.D. in English. In the Netherlands,
for example, they have about the same value.

**Institutional Types**

The distinction between positive and negative institutions opens the possibility to further explore the differences between these two types of institutions and to investigate the processes by which institutions become corrupted and uncorrupted. How do we repair corrupt and parasitic institutions? We can look at successful, and unsuccessful, struggles of positive change? How does ideology work to maintain negative institutions? This is where issues of power, justice and struggle come into play.

**Institutional Practice**

Through the institutional role the individual agent is brought into the picture, and with the agent comes two important concepts, the self and change. From an evolutionary perspective we can investigate how institutions evolved which is a more answerable question than how culture evolved. Within this context we can, as I have suggested above, examine the relationship between language and institution, and which was the first institution to develop?

These studies carry more than theoretical value, for the world is confronting a number of vitally serious issues including global warming, environmental degradation, nuclear proliferation, unending warfare with unacceptable human suffering, poverty and global and local injustice and inequality. To solve these problems, humans have the capacity to see the consequences of their actions, and inactions, but to understand how to solve them they need to understand the processes at work that have generated these problems. To this end, an examination of these problems within an institutional framework will help considerably.

**Final comments**

The institution is the analytical unit that is analogous to the phoneme of language. Like the phoneme, it is invisible (Searle 1990) and yet provides the social reality in which humans operate. We navigate through this reality in much the same way we navigate through our physical reality, drawing on its resources and avoiding its dangers. This concept provides with a general account of what it means to be human and also provides us with a means with which we can analyze individual societies.

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7. The institution as the analytical unit of culture


Appendix 1: Examples of institutional properties

The following examples sketch out the properties of the components of specific institutions. Because there are institutional differences in the classroom (K-12 versus College), the retail store (Macy’s versus Wal-Mart), friendship (the US versus Nigeria), and the like, greater specification is not possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Classroom</th>
<th>Retail Store</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Roles</strong></td>
<td>Teacher/Student T/S</td>
<td>Store Shop Keeper/customer S/C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asymmetrical, positive</td>
<td>Asymmetrical, positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How obtained</strong></td>
<td>Voluntary</td>
<td>Voluntary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T: Teaching certificate</td>
<td>S: Acquire job at the store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S: Enrolling in a school</td>
<td>C: Enter the store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goals</strong></td>
<td>T: Provide instruction</td>
<td>S: Sell merchandise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S: Acquire knowledge/degree</td>
<td>C: Buy merchandise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duties</strong></td>
<td>T: Conduct the class, follow the syllabus, grade homework, assign grades.</td>
<td>S: Show customer samples of merchandise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S: Obey teacher, do homework, come to class.</td>
<td>C: Request information about products, location, quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>T: Knowledge of subject matter and how to teach.</td>
<td>S: Details about different products, how to sell products.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S: Previous grade level knowledge</td>
<td>C: Duties of seller.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discourse</strong></td>
<td>All: literate language, academic topics</td>
<td>All: limited to products that the store offers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T: Engage everyone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S: Speak when spoken to; raise hand for question.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legitimation</strong></td>
<td>Teaching is noble</td>
<td>S: Providing service is a noble calling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Power</strong></td>
<td>T: Controls classroom.</td>
<td>C: Controls what merchandise is involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S: Evaluate teacher</td>
<td>S: Responds to C’s requests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Capital needed</strong></td>
<td>T: Knowledge, authority role</td>
<td>S: Money to stock shop with merchandise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S: Previous grade level knowledge, tuition</td>
<td>C: Money to buy merchandise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Capital acquired</strong></td>
<td>T: Payment for services</td>
<td>S: Money from transaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S: New grade level proficiency</td>
<td>C: Merchandise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Struggle and Resistance</strong></td>
<td>T: Keep students in control</td>
<td>All: Bargaining over the final price.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S: Challenge T’s authority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formality</strong></td>
<td>Very formal</td>
<td>Fairly formal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Slavery</th>
<th>Asymmetrical Greeting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Roles</strong></td>
<td>Master/Slave M/S</td>
<td>Initiator/Responder I/R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asymmetrical, negative</td>
<td>Asymmetrical, positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How obtained</strong></td>
<td>M: Acquisition of slave</td>
<td>All: Through intuitional assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S: Involuntarily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goals</strong></td>
<td>M: Use Slaves labor for personal profit.</td>
<td>All: Establish that relationships are the same as before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S: End the relationship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duties</strong></td>
<td>M: Maintain order, make the slave work</td>
<td>All: When eye contact is made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S: Obey M’s orders</td>
<td>I: initiates the greeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S: How to survive under M’s domination</td>
<td>R: responds and returns the greeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>M: How to manage S</td>
<td>All: Know who the other is institutionally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S: How to survive under M’s domination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discourse</strong></td>
<td>M: Speak with authority</td>
<td>I: Initiates greetings; show deference; likely to use titles like sir, doctor, professor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S: Speak when spoken to. Say “Yes Sir.” When ordered.</td>
<td>R: Responds to initiation and then takes the role of the initiator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legitimation</strong></td>
<td>Slaves were meant to serve and are better off than when free.</td>
<td>The legitimations of social differences are part of proper behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Power</strong></td>
<td>M: Can to use violence and offer favors.</td>
<td>I: The right to initiate a greeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S: Can work with different levels of efficiency and accuracy.</td>
<td>R: The right to wait for the initiator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Capital Needed</strong></td>
<td>M: The power of the institutional of slavery.</td>
<td>I: Lower social rank than R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S: Ability to work</td>
<td>R: Higher social rank than I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Capital Acquired</strong></td>
<td>M: The fruits of S’s labors.</td>
<td>All: Knowledge of social status vis-à-vis the other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S: Room and board</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Struggle and Resistance</strong></td>
<td>M: Threat of violence and the offer of favors</td>
<td>All: If either I or R is unsatisfied with the social ranking vis-à-vis the other, then struggle will occur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S: Can work with different levels of efficiency and accuracy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formality</strong></td>
<td>Very formal</td>
<td>Very formal, some more than others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 2: Examples similar but different institutions

_In these examples, areas which are identical have been deleted._

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Friendship: United States</th>
<th>Friendship: Nigeria</th>
<th>Doctor's office/Clinic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Roles</strong></td>
<td>Teacher/Student T/S</td>
<td>Teacher/Student T/S</td>
<td>Teacher/Student D/P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duties</strong></td>
<td>T: Teach the student to think for one’s self. S: Obey teacher, do homework, come to class.</td>
<td>T: Act as a mentor and guide the student, like a parent, through the course of study. S: Obey teacher, do homework, come to class.</td>
<td>D: training, certification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Power</strong></td>
<td>T: Controls classroom. S: Evaluate teacher</td>
<td>T: Controls classroom. S: Evaluate teacher</td>
<td>P: voluntarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formality</strong></td>
<td>Very formal</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Asymmetrical, positive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Field | Greeting: United States | Greeting: Wolof (Senegal) |  |
|-------|-------------------------|--------------------------|  |
| **Roles** | Initiator/Responder I/R | Initiator/Responder I/R |  |
| **Legitimation** | The legitimations of social differences. Greetings are part of proper behavior. | Proverb: When two people meet, one has the shame and the other has the glory. |  |
| **Discourse** | E: Initiates greetings, show deference (use of title). R: Responds to initiation and then takes the role of the initiator (use of first name) | E: high pitch, rapid tempo, loud voice, verbose R: low pitch, slow tempo, quite voice, terse | Irvine (1974) reports that Wolof greetings are always based on status, with the person with the lower status being the initiator. The initiator takes uses a high-pitched, loud voice, speaks rapidly and voluminously, while the respondent does the opposite. Levine suggests that one of the goals of the greeting is to reestablish (or reaffirm) the social ranking of the two participants and adds that there are opportunities to contest the current arrangement. For example the supposed initiator may fail to initiate or speak with a low-pitched, soft voice and or speak slowly and tersely. The respondent may attempt to initiate and take on the attributes of the initiator. The reason for contesting the status may stem from the desire to avoid some of the responsibilities that the person of higher status would have toward the other. |
| **Struggle and Resistance** | All: If either I or R is unsatisfied with the social ranking vis-a-vis the other, then struggle will occur. | Initiator may try to take role or aspects of the role of the responder. Responder may use same tactic. |  |
| **Formality** | Order of greeting, inquiry into health. | Greetings follow a lengthy and prescribed formula. |  |

| Field | Classroom: United Kingdom | Classroom: China |  |
|-------|--------------------------|-----------------|  |
| **Roles** | Teacher/Student T/S | Teacher/Student T/S | Teacher/Student D/P |
| **Duties** | T: Act as a mentor and guide the student, like a parent, through the course of study. S: Obey teacher, do homework, come to class. | T: Controls classroom. S: Evaluate teacher | D: Determine health of patient and provide remedies P: Follow D’s orders. |
| **Power** | T: Controls classroom. S: Evaluate teacher | T: Controls classroom. S: Evaluate teacher |  |
| **Formality** | Very formal | Same | Asymmetrical, positive |

Friendship in the United States implies that two individuals know each other and are on agreeable terms. In Nigeria, friendship carries with it responsibilities to respond to the needs of the other even if it means an inconvenience.

Jin & Cortazzi (1993) state that in the Chinese classroom, the student expects the teacher to be a parent-like mentor who guides the student in his or her studies. In the Great Britain, like the United States, the teacher is expected to help the student learn to think and act independently. Thus an assignment like “write an essay about friendship” will strike the Chinese student as too vague and lead the Chinese student to ask the British teacher for more direction. When the teacher responds that the (Chinese) student must learn to think for him or herself, the student will come to view the teacher as uncaring.

23