In *Shared Agency*, Bratman aims to develop an account of modest sociality that is continuous with individual planning agency. He believes that one can account for shared agency without augmenting the theoretical resources necessary to account for planning agency in the individual case. As such, the individual planning case is continuous with the modest social case, in contrast with the move from the individual purposive case to the individual planning case, which is discontinuous because of the need to introduce *intentions* that are irreducible to beliefs and desires. This is a reflection of his commitment to the “fecundity of planning agency” – it has rich resources that can be used to account for important aspects of human agency. Thus, in order to understand the case for shared agency that Bratman makes in this book, it is necessary to have a clear picture of the individual planning case. This handout is intended to support acquisition of this picture.

Bratman is a naturalist, a functionalist, and a folk (social) psychologist. His account takes “the intentions of individuals seriously as basic and distinctive elements of individual human agency, elements that go beyond the ordinary desires and beliefs characteristic of simple purposive agency” (11). These intentions are seen as *plan states*, occupying roles in coordinating plans that structure our diachronic agency. Intentions help constitute coordinating plans that are normally partial, enabling us to work around significant limitation of resources; these are filled in as time goes by, providing “continuity and organization over time and, if all goes well, eventually control relevant conduct” (20, Idea #1). In what follows more detail is supplied about intentions in the context of individual agency.

**Functional Specification**

- Intentions are functionally specifiable in terms of roles and norms:
  - **Roles**: they guide, coordinate, and organize thought and action at a time and over time; they are detailed enough to settle matters, but partial enough to enable flexible response; they are hierarchically structured in terms of means and ends; they need not be filled out all at once, but can be filled out over time
  - **Norms**: **consistency** – all one’s plans can be affirmed at once, and can be true at the same time as one’s beliefs; **agglomeration** – one should be able to put together one’s plans into a consistent, complex whole; **means-end coherence** – rational commitment to an end requires filling out the relevant means in a timely fashion; **stability** – they resist reconsideration, which can have a snowball effect as you begin to execute parts of a plan; also, there is a kind of bootstrapping that arises out of them (Idea #6)
    - These norms are explanatory, in that commitment to them explains why
intentions play the psychic roles they play

- They are also substantive, in the sense that they support important forms of functioning in general and are significant when satisfied in particular cases

- As such, intentions are plan states, and plans are intentions “writ large” (Bratman 1987)

Further Embellishments

- Intentions ≠ beliefs, desires, goals, or evaluations

- Intentions can be general and function as policies about certain kinds of conduct with a certain kind of defeasibility. Policies can focus on “what to treat as having more or less weight in the context of certain relevant deliberation” (20), also with a certain kind of defeasibility (Idea ##2, 3, 4)

- Intentions can be reflexive, in that one might intend to A in part because of that very intention. This is found (e.g.) in Grice’s analysis of meaning (Idea #5)

- Planning structures “induce cross-temporal referential connections that are both forward and backward looking” (23) – they make reference to one another, both in the past and in the future; this enables the nesting and interlocking of parts of a plan (Idea #8)

- Not all agents are planning agents, but adult humans are and for them, intentions play an important role in their extended agency (Idea #9)

- This view is compatible with spontaneity, as these are just one element in a “complex psychic economy” (24, Idea #10)

- The theory acknowledges that there are relations with prior deliberation, but “the planning theory highlights in particular the temporally downstream roles of intentions as elements in partial, coordinating plans” (25, Idea #11)

- This is a naturalist theory of the will (Idea #12)