

Empirical Research and Structuration Theory*

Benedict J. Tria Kerkvliet, *Everyday Politics in the Philippines: Class and Status Relations in a Central Luzon Village*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990. 310pp;
Craig Reinerman, *American States of Mind: Political Beliefs and..Behavior Among Private and Public Workers*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987. 262pp;
Paul Willis *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*.
New York: Columbia University Press, 1981. 226pp.

This essay considers three empirical efforts to overcome two invidious dichotomies in sociological inquiry, the methodological disjuncture between 'qualitative,' (hermeneutic, ethnographic) approaches and 'structural' (analytic, objective) approaches, and related to this, the so-called micro-macro gap.

These books are different, but if what follows is correct, they are usefully discussed in terms of structuration theory. None of the books were influenced by this approach, first articulated by Giddens in his *New Rules of Sociological Method* (1976) and then developed in many writings thereafter, including, most fully, *The Constitution of Society* (1984). The three books to be considered are each successes in that they provide illuminating accounts of the problems they addressed.

This is not a surprise. From the present point of view, good social scientific explanation demands that the two dichotomies be overcome. In terms of structuration theory, they are also successes, even if as this essay will try to show, structuration theory could have provided considerable assistance in furthering their projects, specially the books by Reinerman and Kerkvliet. We begin with a brief sketch of structuration theory.

Structuration Theory

Structuration theory is not old wine in new bottles (as suggested, for example, by Turner (1987)). It is best construed as a meta-theory, a (philosophical) theory about persons and society. It takes seriously the idea that, apart from natural events, eruptions of volcanos, tidal waves, etc., persons are the causes of what happens in society. But this is not a methodological individualism since first, what agents do (and are) is enabled and constrained by what they have to work with, and second, what they do always has unintended consequences, including the reproduction/transformation of the practices constituted by their activities. What agents have to work with is, at any point, given, the product of previous actions by themselves and others. These 'materials' can be conceptualized as rules and resources, which as 'sets,' implicated in the 'institutional articulation of social systems,' are structures. For example, everyday life in capitalism, as Marx recognized, is profoundly structured in terms of the 'set:' private property : capital labor contract : profit (Giddens, 1984: 179). Rules, then, are generalized procedures of action, applied in the enactment/reproduction/transformation of practices, activities 'governed by rules.' But following the ethnomethodologists (who followed Wittgenstein), rules must be understood finitistically,' as open: the proper application of a rule (including a concept) 'is developed step by step, in processes involving successions of on-the-spot judgements, (Barnes, 1983; Heritage, 1987). Thus, as Giddens writes, 'the

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discursive formulation of a rule is already an interpretation of it.' Rules are conventional, but they are not arbitrary. As constituting features of practices, they are implicated in material circumstances and they have histories. Thus, one can agree that rules are transsituational, that context and conduct is reproduced and also reject a uniformitarianism in which microinteractions are regularities to be analysed in terms of 'lawlike' patterns of repetitive conduct (versus, e.g., Collins (1988)). Giddens has been criticized on grounds that his conception of social structure is 'entirely phenomenological' (Porpora, 1987, 1989; Layder, 1990), but this charge cannot be sustained. We can see this best, perhaps, by considering power, a central notion in structuration theory. Resources give agents power, the transformative capacity of agents to act on the world, including, then, other persons. Resources may be material, for example, a loaded revolver, but more crucially for social theory, resources depend up (objective) social relations, the place of persons in (rule-governed) practices.

As agents, everyone has *some* power--and thus some freedom (Isaac, 1987); but inequalities and differences in power are easily explained as due to the nature of the social relations--e.g., class, gender and race-- and one's place in them. These pre-exist for individuals who are born and mature in societies in which there are already people engaged in practices defined in terms of social relations.

But although these pre-exist for individuals, neither rules nor resources are 'out-there' if 'out-there' means 'exists independently of (conscious) human action.' In other words, social structure is at once 'objective' (real: enabling and constraining) *and* incarnate in the activities of persons. In rejecting a dualism between agent and structure, structuration theory also rejects a dualism between 'consciousness' and 'material practice,' and between 'culture' and 'structure' (as, for example, 'culture vs economy and polity (Bell, 1973), or in the classical Marxian variant, 'superstructure' and 'base'); and it rejects the (Kantian-inspired) distinction between 'freedom' and 'determinism.'

For structuration theory, in that humans are conscious and have beliefs, purposes and values, 'culture' is implicated *necessarily* in 'economy and polity,' indeed, in everything we do. This implies that qualitative, ethnographic inquiry is indispensable if we are to understand what is going on in society. But we need not (should not!) assume that members understanding of their social world is adequate. This is the fundamental failure of much 'qualitative' work. Accordingly, while description (including 'thick' description) is indispensable, we need to explain why members believe what they believe and--crucially, we need to ask if what they believe is true. Structuration theory is realist in assuming that (1) we can discover participants understanding of what is going on and (2) we can arrive at an adequate understanding of what is going on, an understanding which may or may not be coincident with member's understanding. critique is possible exactly because the character of society is not necessarily (or usually!) transparent to members.

Nor, on this view, are there acts which are which are more and less 'determined,' since unless we lose *agency*, we can always .act otherwise. As Giddens well puts it, 'there is no sense in which structure "determines" action or vice versa.' This dualistic problem is a non-problem, obscured, perhaps, even by sympathetic expositors, for example, Cohen (1987: 285). For structuration theory, 'the nature of the constraints to which individuals are subject, the uses, to which they put the capacities they have and the forms of knowledgeability they display are all themselves historically variable' (Giddens, 1984: 219). Answering these questions, in the concrete, is the real problem for social science. Similarly, because these features are 'historically variable,' structuration theory is not, like Parsonian theory, a general theory of society. Rather, it is a meta-theory which implies that there can be no general theory. How a society works and how it changes must be concretely theorized. All three books to be considered acknowledge this.

Learning to Labor

Of the three studies to be considered, Willis's is surely the most successful example of structuration theory. Indeed, it is of some interest for the sociology of knowledge, not to be pursued here, that the debate within British Marxism in the 70's should have produced the independent work of Willis, Giddens and Bhaskar (1976, 1979). Willis' task is this: The difficult thing to explain about how middle class kids get middle class jobs is why others let them. The difficult thing to explain about how working class kids get working class jobs is why they let themselves (1981: 1). Indeed, if Willis is correct, it is 'too facile' to say that they have no choice, and misleading to say that they are 'socialized' for those jobs. On the contrary, those who end up taking the worse jobs are active participants in constituting a culture which effectively prepares them for those jobs.

In Part I of *Learning to Labor* Willis offers a very rich ethnography of a working class school. The description focuses on 'the lads' who articulate a counter-school culture which in its most 'basic' dimension is 'entrenched general and personalized opposition to "authority"' (1981: 11). The 'conformists' and the 'earholes' have 'a visibly different orientation. It is not so much that they support teachers, rather they support the idea of teachers' (13). The teachers, finally, recognize that their authority 'must be won and maintained on moral not coercive grounds.'

The lads have ample resources with which to resist: 'a continuous scraping of chairs, a bad tempered "tut-tutting" at the simplest request,' 'comics, newspapers and nudes under half lifted desks melt into elusive textbooks,' and more. To be sure the lads know 'the rules.' It is thus that they can so successfully avoid outright confrontation and manipulate them to serve their own purposes. But even more important, within the 'space won from the school and its rules' the lads have created a 'multi-faceted' implement of their culture. Called 'having a laff,' it is used to define the group, 'to defeat boredom and fear, to overcome hardship and problems--as a way out of almost anything' (29). Striking in this regard is their discovery of Garfinkeling: 'Let's laugh at everything he says', 'Lets pretend we can't understand and say, 'How do you mean?' all the time'.

The lads also define themselves against girls and ethnic minorities. Women, for the lads, are both 'sexual objects and domestic comforters.' Girlfriends are called 'the missus.¹ But while 'mum' is the model for the girlfriend, mum 'is definitely accorded an inferior role: "She's a bit thick, like, never knows what I'm on about"(45).

Finally, since this is a working class school, Willis provides an account of the 'shopfloor culture' which is the domestic context for the students and thus a potential resource for them. He finds two critical features: first, 'a massive attempt to gain informal control over the work process' and second, a disdain for theory: 'The shopfloor abounds with apocryphal stories about the idiocy of purely theoretical knowledge. Practical ability always comes first and is a *condition* for other kinds of knowledge' (56). It is plain that these work against the school and provide a critical contrast to middle-class environments and schools. As Willis writes: 'When the middle class child is thrown back on to his indigenous culture, instead of finding strengthening and confirming oppositional themes there, he finds the same ones' (76).

The critical difference, then, between 'the lads' and the 'earholes' is that the latter have accepted the critical principle of the teacher/pupil relation, the idea of teaching as a 'fair exchange': knowledge for respect, guidance for control.' Of course, this is supported and sanctioned in many ways, beautifully developed by Willis.

In Part II, then, Willis attempts to explain the key aspects of what he has described. Two key theoretical concepts are introduced. 'Penetration' is defined as 'impulses with a cultural form towards the penetration of the conditions of existence of its members and their position with the social whole but in a way which is not centred, essentialist or individualist.' This firmly realist formulation demands a great deal. In the first place, and importantly, it is not the purpose of members to achieve penetration, however much 'practical consciousness, may reveal understanding of the conditions of existence. Secondly--and this is a problem shared by social scientists who specifically seek such understanding--penetration is, at best, 'partially since there are always 'limitations:' 'blocks, diversions and ideological effects which confuse and impede the full development and expression of these impulses' (119).

Indeed, the fact that members may lack any sort of adequate 'discursive' knowledge of what is going *and* may still have practical knowledge which, if properly understood, shows that they have achieved at least partial penetration is the basis for the failure of survey research. As Willis writes: 'direct and explicit consciousness' 'may well reflect only the final stages of cultural processes and the mystified and contradictory forms *which basic* insights take as they are lived out.' It is only by fully immersing oneself in extended interaction that one may discover what is really known. Moreover, methods *which rely* on verbal or written responses cannot *distinguish* 'attempts to please the other,' superficial mimicry, earnest attempts to follow abstract norms of, say, politeness, sophistication or what is taken as intelligence' from comments and responses offered in *ongoing activity* which 'have a true cultural resonance' (122).

Willis then seeks to explain and assess the beliefs and actions of the agents in his study. on his view 'the lads' rejection of school and opposition to teachers is a consequence of their penetration of the 'teaching paradigm.' They 'know' better than 'the new vocational guidance what is the real state of the job market.' Thus, they have a 'deep seated scepticism about the value of the qualifications in relation to what might be sacrificed to get them' (126). More, the lads make 'a real penetration of what might be called the difference between *individual* and *group* logics and the nature of their ideological confusion in modern education' (128). In the school and in the culture, 'it is never admitted that not all can succeed.' Finally, and even more profoundly, since the grasp of this reality leads them to assume that they will be doing the least skilled forms of labor, they make the further penetration into the fundamental features of capitalist production, that 'the measure of abstract labour is ... time' (135).

'The lads' indifference to the particular form of work they enter, their assumption of the meaningless of work not what kind of "right attitude" they take to it, and their general sense of the similarity of all work as it faces them, is the form of a cultural penetration of their real conditions of existence as members of class (136).

These are, however, but partial penetrations and by no means are they sufficient to make these youths into politically active radicals. Willis argues that these penetrations may be seen as a rejection of conventionally constituted individualism. But individualism is not defeated in itself, but 'for its part in the school masque where mental work is associated with unjustified authority, with qualifications whose promise is illusory, (146). The upshot is the reverse polarization of the manual/mental labor distinction and the consequence rejection of all that school might offer. But, argues Willis, this re-valuation of manual labor depends upon sexism: 'Manual labor is associated with the social superiority of masculinity, and mental labor with the social inferiority of femininity' (148). Indeed, 'we may say that where the principle of general abstract labor has emptied work of significance from the inside, a transformed patriarchy has filled it with significance from the outside ... The brutality of the working situation is partially re-interpreted into a heroic exercise of manly confrontation with the task' (150). To be sure, this

youthful re-evaluation need not be permanent. It suffices that it last long enough to effectively trap them forever.

Willis notes that while this goes some way toward explaining why all-do not aspire to the 'rewards and satisfactions of mental labour,' it is easy enough to see how insights into their future in the world of work would lead people to refuse to work at all. Willis had in mind here West Indians who have inherited a culture of wagelessness and poverty, but Black Americans with similar legacies might also seize this possibility.

Before concluding this section, several further features may be noted. Willis's school was working class in a fairly straight-forward sense: the students were all from families of *manual* laborers. Willis makes no effort to explain how it is that some of the youths become lads and some become conformists. Moreover, 'differentiation,' the process by which this occurs is left largely unanalyzed. Since individuals are biographically unique, this is perhaps as it must be. He is clear that the answer is not in parenting. 'Parents have their own complex and creative relations to class themes and in so sense press their children into a simple standard working class mold' (73). Rather, working class values and problems--including the need for cash--are *materials* for differentiation. Thus, the idea of socialization as that is used in mainstream sociology plays no role in Willis's account. As he was at pains to show, social agents are not passive bearers of ideology, but 'active appropriators who reproduce existing structures only through struggle, contestation and partial penetration of those structures' (175).

Similarly, 'dominant ideology' theses mis-identify what is at issue. Not only is the functional neatness of such theory totally rejected, but much of the critical cultural material is not mediated downward from dominant groups, Rather, it comes from 'internal cultural relationships,' for example, the working class affirmation of manual labour. On Willis's view, ideology does 'naturalize' what is conventional and fragile, and, crucially, it does 'dislocate.' Thus, in liberal culture, there is pervasive emphasis on the differentiation of occupational possibilities for youth and on the range of opportunities these provide for individual satisfactions. But since these ideas do not convince those who doom themselves for manual labor, 'the effect of its thrust is reversed and acts centripetally, not to make jobs various, but to decentre the cause of their sameness' (163). 'It is ... no one's fault that work is boring and tiring and mostly meaningless ... Instead of a centred world of oppression from a specific and determinate social organization of thought, production and interests we have the naturalistic world of a thousand timeless causes' (163) But we should note that both the conformists and 'the lads' ended up doing similar work, even if 'the conformists can believe themselves, especially equipped with qualifications, to be in 'better' jobs than, and to be a 'different kind of person from, "the lads"' (152). Indeed, as Willis says, 'once such a division is founded in the working class ... it massively legitimates the position of the middle class: not capitalism but their own mental capacities keep them where they are' (152).

Willis's study beautifully exemplifies structuration theory, and shows how ethnography and structural analysis can be linked, even though there are a number of formulations which, from the point of view of structuration theory, are objectionable. Thus, at one point he writes of two basic 'moments.' In the first, outside structures and basic class relations are taken in as symbolic and conceptual relations at the specifically cultural level ... In the second 'moment' of the process, structures *which have* now become the sources of meaning... provide the framework and basis for decisions and choices ... (174).

This 'dialectical' formulation is highly misleading (reminding one of Berger and Luckmann's influential *Social Construction of Reality*). As noted, there is no 'outside' ('objective') and 'inside'

('subjective'). This miscuts the pie, reifies the objective and leaves us with gaps that cannot be bridged. For example: It is difficult to make sense of 'structures' which are stripped of meaning; so we tilt toward platonism--infusing self-subsistent structures with meaning. Alternatively, how can meaningful acts affect structures which are 'outside'.' As Bhaskar has insisted, the 'dialectical' formulation encourages a voluntarist idealism as regards our understanding of social structure and a mechanistic determinism as regards our understanding of people. For structuration theory, there are only conscious agents acting with materials at hand. Instead of a 'dialectic' between two 'things,' there are only agents whose acts have consequences. Similarly, there is no 'couplet structure/culture' (174). To say (merely) that 'the cultural level is in no sense free-floating' (185) suggests that 'it' stands in some sort of causal (or dialectical) relation to structure. But, as Marx insisted, material activity is conscious activity. Willis shortly thereafter arrived at this position. In rejecting the idea that culture is an artifice, he wrote: 'Clearly this is a special use of the concept of culture. In part it can be thought of as an anthropological use of the term, where not only the special, heightened and separate forms of experience, but all experiences, and especially as they lie around central life struggles and actives, are taken as the proper focus of cultural analysis' (1979). The volume in which Willis's useful essay is reprinted, not incidentally, contains mostly essays which buy totally into a culture/structure dichotomy--and then pursue, without success, remedies to the dichotomy.

American States of Mind

Reinarman's task was to 'to discover something about the ways in which work and private life inform political belief about capitalism and democracy and the master conflicts of the 1980s ... What molecules of everyday experience make up the "tax revolt" or the "shift to conservatism" or "health care as a right' (vii-viii). More broadly, Reinarman offers 'the hope of learning how individual experience is informed by and comes to affect social structure' (14, note 10). For reasons similar to those identified by Willis, Reinarman rejected survey research. Indeed, stimulated by survey research which showed that contradictory beliefs and ideological inconsistency is the norm, Reinarman pursued the idea that 'there might be forms of subjective consistency that were important for grasping why people believe what they believe and act as they do (15).

There was only one way to test this idea: by immersing himself in the lives of small set of individuals. Reinarman is apologetic that this meant that he had to sacrifice hopes of 'representativeness' or 'generalizability.' To be sure, the twelve workers he selected are not 'representative' and thus, he could not generalize from their beliefs to the beliefs of 'working class Americans' (whoever that includes!). Nevertheless, he does show us a great deal about the processes of belief formation, and negatively, he demonstrated that a good deal of what is conventional wisdom as regards political belief and behavior is probably false.

Reinarman's fundamental problem as regards structure was the notion of class--largely unproblematic for Willis's study. He rejects an 'embourgeoisment thesis' which would make 'workers' into 'middle class' and sees that there are serious problems as regards whether the 'new class' of persons 'who share advanced education and thus have in interest in the value of cultural or human capital' can be said to constitute a class at all (173). Yet aside from passing reference to the notion of 'contradictory class position,' he is nowhere clear as regards his theory of class. He sees that 'if "class" is understood as a *category* defined by relative position in the social structure and by interests that purportedly flow from that position, then class is not enough to account for observed variations in the political beliefs of *individuals* (175). More generally, versus the dominant tradition in political sociology, he sees that no 'interest paradigm' will work to explain either belief or behavior. His alternative is to argue that the experiences one brings to the workplace and the form of workplace activity at which one arrives is crucial as regards this.

As regards the experiences one brings to the workplace and the particular workplace at which one arrives, Reinerman's life histories show that traditional sociological notions of socialization and generation are severely limited as explanatory theories. Thus, the role of the family is unclear. 'One's epoch, like one's parents, is resisted in some ways even while being accommodated in others' (180). Since agents are active, from the point of view of structuration theory, this is unsurprising. On the other hand, he implies that the class position (unanalyzed) of the families of his subjects bear heavily on their current class positions. Moreover, it is critical to his argument, as noted, that the form of work bears importantly on political belief. By 'form of work' he means that 'over and above class position--one's role in the division of labor and one's relative income position--any given type of labor may be situated on a *commodity-career* continuum' (183). It is just here that his study cries out for a full-blown theory of class pertinent to post-War America.

Structuration theory is not committed to any particular theory of class, or indeed, even to the idea of class. But it is committed to the idea of social structure. Since class theory figures in all three books under discussion as in much structural analysis--for very good reasons--I am led to engage it. Moreover, and worth emphasis, structuration theory is committed to the idea of concrete theory--theory specifically articulated in order to understand particular concrete societies. I think that Giddens is correct in arguing that class theory applies only to capitalist societies and that while one can sketch some general structuring elements of class (as below), specific class systems will differ according to historical and local factors. Finally, as Giddens says, 'one of the specific aims of class analysis in relation to empirical societies must necessarily be that of determining how strongly, in any given case, the "class principle" has become established as a mode of structuration' (1973: 110).

Reinerman seems burdened by assuming a class theory in which the form of work is an independent consideration. It leads him to ignore class as the major locus of resources available to his actors. In classical Marxian class theory, of course, the members of the 'working class' were not merely wage-workers; they were (largely) factory workers and producers of surplus value, who, by virtue of this, had definite workplace experiences and distinct class interests. Of course, as a consequence of changes in capitalism, this leaves too many 'workers' out. At one point Reinerman confesses that 'either I had to abandon the assumption that economic position and work role are important for explaining political consciousness or I had to enrich my conception of interests and my understanding of how they influence ideology' (175). Reinerman rightly rejected a mechanistic account of the relation of structure to consciousness. But instead of 'enriching his conception of interests, he would have achieved much greater explanatory power had he enriched his class theory.

Given that his twelve subjects were evenly divided between those who worked for the National Delivery corporation (NDC)—'a Paragon of Productivity' and social service (CSS), his theorization of a commodity-career continuum seems ad hoc. Worse, it obliterates some key features in work experience and thus accommodated in others' (180). Since agents are active, from the point of view of structuration theory, this is unsurprising. on the other hand, he implies that the class position (unanalyzed) of the families of his subjects bear heavily on their current class positions. Moreover, it is critical to his argument, as noted, that the form of work bears importantly on political belief. By 'form of work' he means that 'over and above class position--one's role in the division of labor and one's relative income position--any given type of labor may be situated on a *commodity-career* continuum' (183). It is just here that his study cries out for a full-blown theory of class pertinent to post-War America. He writes:

If work takes a *commodity* form, worker's life-building strategies tend to be based upon the expectation that one has a right only to trade one's labor for the highest price in order to underwrite private life Thus, there tends to be a marked split between work and life ...

If work takes a career form, life-building strategies tend to be based upon expectation that one has the right to choose work that has meaning beyond its ability to finance private life ... Thus, there tends to be an integration of work with life or least a muted split between them (184-85).

This is suggestive, but vague and incomplete. However, it is easy enough to include what seems to be at issue into the ramified class analysis offered by Giddens (1980).

On Giddens's view, the 'structuration' of class relationships is mediated by the distribution of mobility chances. In general, the formation of identifiable classes depends upon the degree of 'closure' of these, both intergenerationally (above) and within the career of an individual. Mobility closure depends first upon resources available to individuals: ownership of property in the means of production, possession of educational and technical skills, and (lacking these) possession of labor-power. In addition, there are three 'proximate' sources of class structuration, the occupational division of labor, the authority relationships within the enterprise and the 'influence' of 'distributional groupings,--originating in the sphere of consumption. The proximate sources may contribute to *or* work against closure. Thus as in Reinerman's analysis, 'workers' (both with education or without it) may move between jobs in the public and private sectors, and in virtue of this, have different work experiences and thus different attitudes and beliefs. An uneducated public service worker has a different work experience than a person doing the same job with a private corporation. Similarly, common patterns of consumption (themselves explained by similarities in income, access to mortgages, etc.) may reinforce or work against closure. For example, closure is promoted when factory workers live in 'working-class neighborhoods.' By contrast, petty bourgeois and manual workers like those in Reinerman's study who work with considerable independence but under an extraordinary incentive scheme (26) may well share in consumption patterns and in work experience. On the other hand, as in his study, workers at the two sites having similar skills and income levels may have strikingly different work experience.

The point, then, is not to deny the importance of class as a critical structuring element in consciousness, but to see that class is more complicated than is admitted and that, as Reinerman appreciates, its outcomes are not mechanically produced. What, then, did Reinerman learn? His ethnography showed him that both the sources and levels of dissatisfaction were similar in the two work sites; but strikingly, there were important differences in 'the ideological inferences' drawn from these dissatisfactions and differences in the styles of resistance which they took. Reinerman saw that this could be explained in terms of work experience. In the present language, while fundamental features of their lives were constrained (and enabled) by similar structures, the different rules and resources available at the workplace enabled agents to arrive at considerably different views and behaviors.

First, unlike the manual workers described in Willis's study, Reinerman's workers's identities and their satisfaction with work depended upon at least the illusion that they had not been transformed, as James O'Connor puts it, from "concrete labor producing use values" into "social abstract labor producing exchange values" (185, note 8). (This sentence occurs in a footnote and raises some questions about the category 'commodity production' in his continuum.) I would argue that these workers were not producers of surplus value in any clear sense. Moreover, both groups worked in authority relations which gave them considerable independence. Finally, their income levels gave them sufficient resources for a comfortable, if modest, private life-'middle class' in the American sense.

Second, while for the NDC workers 'the concept of "the market" per se was inarticulatable, taken for granted as part of the natural world,' it was nonetheless the case that 'the logic undergirding market institutions form[ed] a primary axis of their habitus' (183). 'The laissez-faire moral economy was their social world' (186). This goes a long way toward explaining their attitudes toward the state and bureaucracy. The contrast to the social service workers is obvious.

Third, the NDC workers were 'atomized and isolated from each other by virtue of their individual routes.' The CSS workers shared a common space and often shared coffee and lunch breaks. 'Communication was an inherent dimension of their work' and, in marked contrast to the NDC workers, 'collegial support was commonly given at CSS as the antidote to burnout.' Workers at NDC had few opportunities for political discussion; the CSS workers talked politics all the time.

But one cannot conclude that the views and opinions of the twelve fit into coherent ideologies. For example, CSS worker Kurt Wilson, 'a committed democratic socialist, local union president, and the most consistent leftist among the public-sector six, opted for more spending on police and prisons.' Indeed, such apparent inconsistencies characterized all twelve. Reinerman argues that this had nothing to do with any lack of cognitive sophistication, that his workers were neither dupes nor dopes. On the contrary 'ideological consistency is situationally achieved' (217). 'Structurally situated actors bring mutually informing material and identity interests to bear upon their purposes in more or less emergent interactional contexts' (218). When pressed to give his reasons Kurt Wilson explained that the 'capitalist crisis' increased social hardship and thus violence. Moreover, it was 'working people' who were most often the victims (213). As a radical he felt constrained to support police.

What then of 'false consciousness' and ideology? No doubt Reinerman's twelve workers had varying degrees of clarity as regards the social reality which they were parties in reproducing/transforming. The NDC workers, for example, were by no means uncritical of the status quo. Greg Buford, an NDC driver identified himself as 'conservative,' but insisted as well that 'big business is behind every evil in the world' (58). Reinerman's main conclusion in this regard warrants emphasis: 'I think we know far less about what political beliefs are and mean than we think' (223).

His analysis of the forming of micro-belief led him, finally, to reconsider the idea of 'public opinion.' After acknowledging the by now familiar point that leaders with access to mass media play a huge role in what comes to be 'public opinion,' he argues that 'public opinion seems to me to be constructed in a second and more subtle way by the mechanisms that purport to measure it.' Indeed, 'the polls, surveys, ballots, voting tallies, and media reports on them make up the [non-neutral] political technology' of our political culture is an expropriation of 'the means of making meaning'--a hollow but very real ideological force in modern mass societies.

Everyday Politics in the Philippines

Ben Kerkvliet is a political scientist who became convinced that researchers who begin with 'the conventional approach to politics, concentrating on elections and how local and national governments work, miss what is most crucial: that there are important consequences for politics in seeing that everyday life is political.' To carry out his inquiry, then, he spent (along with his wife) many months over a seventeen year period in a village of some 230 households in central Luzon. And like the other books considered here, he aimed to explain what he had learned from his ethnographic work. of especial importance is his analysis of the forms of resistance which are characteristic of everyday political life in the Philippines. He was led to conclude, importantly, that 'poor peasants and workers in San Ricardo are

neither passive nor mystified,' neither as 'confused or unconscious about what they were doing' (262)--as so much of literature, Marxist and non-Marxist, would seem to hold.

It is clear enough that Kerkvliet centers agency while appreciating that actors have determinate materials to work with. Although he had not followed either the structuration or 'realist' literature in the philosophy of social sciences, he had arrived at a methodological position in its spirit--though as I shall suggest, not in its letter.

His account begins, as I think it must, with a crisp account of the fundamental feature of Philippine social structure--expanding capitalism. And as part of this, he argues that a critical event, informing all that followed, was the Huk rebellion--about which he had already done an important study (1977). He then offers an analysis of status and class and follows this with a chapter, 'Household views of Class and Status Politics' which introduces some of his qualitative work. Resistance is then described, explained--and assessed.

It may be useful here to repeat some of the critical assumptions of structuration theory, here emphasizing its realist dimension. First, we need to assume that we can grasp the members understanding of their society. (I have no doubt that Kerkvliet succeeded in this.) Second, we must assume that it may not be adequate; and this means that we must assume that we can defend what seems to us to be an adequate understanding. To be sure, *our* (social scientific) understanding needs to be informed by *their* understanding. We are, after all, trying to explain their society, and on the present view, it is their acts, informed and constrained by others, which constitute it. The idea of 'grounded theory' is here pertinent (Layder, 1994). By comparing their understanding with ours, then, we can judge how adequate their understanding is, whether to use his language, workers and peasants are 'mystified.'

Accordingly, if they do not have a sufficient grasp, then their resistance may be mis-aimed, even counterproductive (as with Willis's lads). If on the other hand, their grasp is adequate, then their resistance is not misdirected (even if it fails) and, perhaps, they can take further political steps toward constructive changes.

Kerkvliet was, it seems to me, unwilling to take fully the realist bull by the horns. That is, his structural analysis bows too much to the member's understanding of their society. Insofar, the claim that they are not mystified loses much of its force. Part of the problem (and the reason for this) stems from his acknowledgement of the importance of class in structuring everyday life, but from seeing *also* that the theories in general use do not work, especially in San Ricardo which is a political economy in transition to capitalism. Thus, he offers that the villagers offer two typologies which

resonate with theoretical literature going back at least as far as Max Weber. As part of his argument about the distribution of power in society, Weber distinguishes between how people are stratified according to production and property and according to their consumption of goods and style of life (60).

Class, as in Marx is, then, appropriate for stratification according to production and property. Indeed, where Kerkvliet is able to use class in this restricted sense, his analysis is most illuminating. That is, he is able to show that some resistance is *class* resistance, aimed at what is seen to be class exploitation. Unfortunately, even here there are problems since all the 'capitalists' in San Ricardo are, by any stretch of the imagination, *little* capitalists. Nowhere does he show that resistance acknowledges that the *big*

capitalists in Manila or New New York are their real problem. Of course, if this is true, the political consequences of seeing this will be critical.

On the other hand, Kerkvliet sees that status is not quite right as regards stratification in San Ricardo since the critical 'non-class' variable is income—not 'honor' or 'esteem.' Most striking in this regards is the fact that the rich/poor dichotomy cuts across the 'class' divisions so that there are e.g., (relatively speaking!) rich workers, rich small business people *and* rich peasants! On the present view, this striking phenomenon would have been more coherently dealt with without trying to combine an inadequate class account with a highly empirical description of income distribution. It would have preferable, I think, to offer a theory of class in which (as above) income would figure as a proximate source in class structuration, a source which, dramatically in this case, acts to prevent class closure--and thus to prevent not only class consciousness, but class awareness. As Kerkvliet recognized, almost in passing, the fact that not all the rich were 'capitalists' 'obstructs unity among those of the same class' (77).

This bears heavily as regards his assessment of the resistance which he carefully documents. Kerkvliet sees that there are problems with the view (developed by Scott (1985)) that resistance is rationalized in terms of 'past practices.' since 'the good old days' were not so very good and, in any case, will not likely be reconstitutable, nostalgia cannot provide a useful wedge for a transformative politics. Still 'conflicting interpretations of obligations of reciprocity, patron-client ties, and other status relations remain an important theme in everyday politics.' Moreover, in consequence of this 'a prevalent idiom ... is "help" (tulong), 'an idiom oriented toward the poor/rich continuum, rather than class (268).

More potentially liberating is another discourse in use. 'Villagers also contend that as human beings, regardless of whether reciprocity or assistance obligations are an issue and regardless of what the market might dictate, they are entitled to security and dignity. 'Basic rights' discourse depends upon an alternative understanding of their problems:

They generally reject the explanation they hear directly and indirectly from the rich that they have only themselves to blame for their poverty and unreliable livelihoods. Instead, they attribute their precarious situation, at least in substantial measure, to having been swindled and abused by rich people and capitalists (269).

The issue here, it should be noted, is not whether the poor of San Ricardo need to be 'revolutionaries.' That will depend on the character of their situation and their goals. And, indeed, even if they share in goals and in having an adequate understanding of their situation, their politics will still be contestable. From the present point of view, the issue is whether they have an adequate understanding of the sources of their difficulties.

It is fair to say, I think, that there never has been a society in which members were each active and unmystified; nor from the point of structuration theory, is it likely that there has ever been a society whose members were *passive*--despite what so much mainstream and Marxist social science suggests. Kerkvliet surely demonstrates this as regards the people of San Ricardo. But it is much less clear whether it can be said that they have an adequate understanding of their situation. One will hope that they do since, as noted, the resistance which he documented might then become a liberating politics.

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