



## ***Editor's Note: Beyond the Dissociative Disorder and Hypnosis of Rigid Disciplinarity***

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**Abstract:** This is the journal editor's note to the Winter 2011 issue of *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*, entitled "Graduate Theorizations: Imaginative Applied Sociologies—Manifest and Latent." The issue includes nine, theoretically engaging graduate student papers: six from a course in Applied Sociological Theory (Soc. 605) taken during the Fall 2010 semester at UMass Boston, a paper on the philosophy of the self and architecture from the London School of Economics and Political Science, and two master's theses in psychology from Bangor University, UK. The papers explore sociological imaginations of personal and public issues such as: fear of crime and insecurity; marriage and divorce; growing up a third culture kid; myths of success and the life plan; growing up with Attention Deficit Disorder; present (in contrast to absent) fatherhood; architectural history and practice as shaped by self agency as well as social context; "pathological" versus "normal" experiences of dissociation and hypnosis; and mind-body interactions in psychogenic pain. These papers from diverse 'disciplinary' origins or locations insightfully contribute, in both manifest and latent ways, to the application and enrichment of the Millsian sociological imagination. Comparative and integrative readings of these papers also reveal, in turn, the extent to which liberating sociological theorizing and practice amid critical applications of the sociological imagination require awakening to and moving beyond the dissociative disorder and hypnosis of rigid disciplinarity.

The Winter 2011 issue of *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* includes nine, theoretically engaging graduate student papers: six from a course in Applied Sociological Theory (Soc. 605) taken during the Fall 2010 semester at UMass Boston, a paper on the philosophy of the self and architecture from the London School of Economics and Political Science, and two master's theses in psychology from Bangor University, UK. These papers from

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"From the time I wake up in the morning, until I go to bed at night"—writes Alison M. Ireland in her article entitled, "Five Doors, Three Cameras, and A Dead Bolt: How Fear of Crime Is Filling Our Prisons and Consuming Personal Liberty"—

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“everything I do is recorded and potentially monitored. ... The websites I visit are recorded. My children and I are recorded in the elevator in our building and then again in the parking garage as we load into our car. If we decide to go into the library we are taped and the books we borrow are logged. At the grocery store, gas station, recreation center, and school, we are recorded. ... If you find yourself in my apartment, it means you have gone through five locked doors, and passed on average three video cameras” (p. 2). In the course of her study, Ireland applies her sociological imagination and various sociological theories and concepts to explore the nature of personal privacy and “fear of crime”—her own and those of others alike—in relation to public issues involving racial profiling and mass imprisonment in the US amid a troubling global context of fear mongering, especially following the tragic 9/11 events. When considering how the personal, subjective, and the broader, public, objective conditions interact to make the culture of fear and insecurity possible, Ireland notes: “Objective reality acts upon us through institutions we ourselves create by the process of **habitualization**. All of the precautions we take, locking our doors, installing call boxes on college campuses, giving undergraduates rape whistles, issuing color coded terrorist threat levels, body scans at airports, and carrying pepper sprays contribute to the objective reality that the world is a dangerous place, a fearful place” (p. 5; bold in the original).

Following a similar theme of how our social realities are constituted through the habits we perpetuate in our everyday lives, Julianne S. Siegfriedt, in “Congratulating Conscious Choice: Exploring Society and the Self through Marriage and Divorce,” critically reflects on her own experience of marriage and divorce to problematize the taken-for-granted attitudes we often hold toward them—subjecting her own personal life as well as its broader social context to in-

depth theoretical scrutiny within a Millsian sociological imagination framework. Toward the end of her analysis, when examining the parallel she finds between her awakenings to her experience of marriage and divorce and the story of the movie *Awakenings*, she writes: “Similar to how patients were awakened out of their catatonic state, or the way in which Dr. Sayer was awakened to new appreciations of his personal and social world (e.g., asking the nurse Eleanor for a cup of coffee at the end of the movie), I feel I have been awakened from the previously rigid state of conceptualizations of marriage and relationships” (p. 62). She adds, “I am sure that I will experience many similar ‘awakenings’ in my life where I stop and analyze why it is I think in a certain way or am doing a particular action. It is my hope that I can remain awake and not fall back into the catatonic state of sleep as the patients in the movie found themselves in” (Ibid.). In other words, what Siegfriedt questions in the course of her personal and broader sociological self-reflections is not whether to seek marriage or divorce in the future per se, but the affirmation that as a human being she has a right to have a conscious voice, and choice, in making such important decisions, despite the long-standing habitual patterns of socialization and public opinion constraining the individual in such matters throughout the life-course.

K. R., in her “Growing Up A Third Culture Kid: A Sociological Self-Exploration,” also applies her sociological imagination as framed by major sociological theories and concepts to understand more deeply her personal experience of growing up a third culture kid, one who—due to her family’s employment in the US military—had to spend most of her life growing up abroad. R.’s theoretically-informed self-exploration enables her to shed new light on her perceived personality traits. She writes, for instance: “My quietness is often a result of assessing my new surrounding and, in

turn, assigning meaning to the objects that I take in. However, having constantly experienced people's assumption that I am shy, I cannot deny that I have **internalized** a part of this self-perception as an attribute of my character. According to Berger and Luckmann, internalization happens when 'the objectivated social world is retrojected into consciousness in the course of socialization' (1966:61). When I look back at my childhood, I often think of myself as a shy child. However, now, as I integrate micro-sociological theories into my perspective, and with the benefit of hindsight, I can see how my quiet uncertainty was less of a personality trait and more of a reaction to the need to define the new situation and establish my identity in my new surroundings" (pp. 31-32; bold in the original). Noting that "Erving Goffman's dramaturgical approach to social interaction can be used to illustrate the existence of multiple selves" (p. 31), R. is distinguishing in the above between (1) a self that has internalized presumed notions of her shyness from others in the front-stages of her everyday life, and (2) another back-stage self that is not shy after all but thoughtfully and quietly assessing her new surroundings as a third culture kid, and (3) yet another self that is awakening—while writing her paper—to the realization of the distinction between the above two selves as played out in the literary theater of her term-paper assignment. As R. concludes, "we each seek to build connections to those around us and through those connections we can continue to experience times of awakening throughout our daily lives" (p. 41).

Linda M. Lazcano, in her "Myth of the Life Plan: A Search for Happiness," subjects her and our habitual notions of "happiness" and "success" in life to theoretical and imaginative sociological analysis. In her own words, Lazcano employs "a phenomenological approach while drawing on other sociological theories and concepts to illustrate how individual happiness is domi-

nated and impaired by the American cultural myth—a blueprint for a life plan that inextricably links success and materialism as a precursory condition to happiness" (p.43). Further she adds, "From birth, people are indoctrinated with the myth, its tenets of future-mindedness and possession repeatedly legitimated throughout culture. I argue that the American culture myth of a systematic life plan fundamentally obstructs happiness, ultimately dominating and enslaving the individual in what Georg Simmel calls the *tragedy of culture*" (Ibid.). Drawing on Ben-Shahar's (2007) notion of the Rat Racer self, Lazcano argues that such a self "is a response to the dominant culture's association of material goods with fulfillment and status. ... The Rat Racer self does not live in the present and is ultimately unfulfilled. However, we are unable to discern this harmful cycle and we continue to 'chase the ever-elusive future our entire lives' (Ben-Shahar 2007: 19)" (Lazcano, p. 44). Having conducted her insightful self-exploration, Lazcano still finds the challenge of awakening to the hypnosis of success-myths internalized by our Rat Racer selves formidable: "Even after unraveling the source of my alienation and unhappiness, it has been a struggle to maintain my awakened state. The Rat Racer self is so internalized that I often find myself acting on its values without my consciousness" (p. 52).

In "Drawing Attention to a Public Deficit: Sociological Self-Reflections on Growing Up with ADD," Ellen Maher reflects on her own experiences of growing with ADD, and while applying her sociological imagination in a micro-macro theoretical framework, she seeks to break down the common misunderstandings held in society regarding ADD. These misconceptions, Maher argues, are significant obstacles to the diagnosis and healing of ADD in the lives of those dealing with the disorder. The courageous step Maher has taken to share her story and analysis in this article is itself a

practical demonstration of the efforts needed to change the public perceptions regarding ADD. In Maher's own words: "In the end one of the biggest steps I can take to make strides in working through barriers of having ADD is learning to confront those who preach the validity of the stereotypes. When I am involved in conversation where people are saying ADD doesn't exist, instead of not speaking up for fear that it may diminish the character I have been portraying for years, I can tell them some of the deeper implications of having ADD. These misunderstandings stem from the lack of a true base of knowledge on the topic, and being one of the many who have had to hear from all their peers that it is a made-up condition, it is time for myself and other who have it to stand up and begin correcting this misinformation and lack of knowledge. This is also what gives me courage and hope to share my story of personal troubles with ADD through this paper so as to further educate others about it as a public issue" (p. 66). Maher, in other words, finds the taken-for-granted presumptions habitually held by the public regarding ADD an obstacle, one that can be removed through the voicing of her side of the story to awaken others. When reflecting on the message of the film *Awakenings*, she writes, "Much like the common assumption facing the patient in awakening, that they were nothing more than catatonic bodies, common assumptions become hurdles to the ADD individual's everyday life. ... It is these types of assumptions that keep the ADD individual trapped. ... Under such circumstances of public stigma, then, ADD individuals (or others for that matter) find themselves unable to *negate* or challenge the ideas presented by the status quo (Appelrouth and Edles 2008:403) surrounding ADD in order to break free and redefine the terms of their diagnosis" (p. 62).

Edmund J. Melia, in his "The *Present* Father: Applying Sociological Theory from A Father's Standpoint," uses his sociologi-

cal imagination and various learned theories and concepts in the course to take issue with another public stereotype that sets obstacles to the joy and responsibilities of experiencing his role as a father. An important dimension of Melia's sociological self-exploration is that of the way in which he relates his own growing up experience during a difficult period of his life with that of his present self-concept as a good father: "This period of my life was so bad that I have literally blocked out much of it and have very few memories. My sister to this day still has to tell me things that should be obvious from our childhood. I can relate this feeling to the HBO documentary film *Multiple Personalities: The Search for Deadly Memories* (1994), which portrays three cases of severe, what is today called, Dissociative Identity Disorder—each at a different stage of recovery. I feel as if I have a self that has gone missing and that is deeply suppressed due to traumatic experiences. While I know that there was never any sexual abuse like the people whose lives are documented in the film, I still have a part of me that is largely non-existent, at least in my conscious memory. I have things deep in my past that I do not remember and have blocked out because of how horrible and painful they were" (pp. 71-72). Reflecting on his study, Melia concludes: "As I have gone through the motions of completing this assignment I have learned a great deal about the social world around me, and how I fit into it as a father. I have learned to come to terms with the fact that I am the product of a difficult childhood in which fathers were not always the best role models. Through reviewing relevant literature I have also learned that fathers are often perceived as I have described my experiences in doctor's offices and daycare centers: as a sort of second-class parent. I have also learned that I have been exercising my own agency for change throughout my life, which was a great realization" (p. 79).

The six graduate student papers from

the course "Soc. 605: Applied Sociological Theory" offered at UMass Boston as introduced above are followed by three papers from the UK, and from seemingly "other" disciplinary backgrounds.

Edmund Melia's above-mentioned appreciation of his own agency as a good father in designing and constructing an alternative lifestyle for his family *despite* the difficult social context of his own upbringing interestingly echoes the central thesis of Durukan Kuzu's study—though the link may not be readily apparent to others afflicted with rigid academic disciplinarity. Kuzu, a doctoral candidate in the Government Department at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSEPS), engages in a comparative study of Heidegger's and Sartre's philosophies of the self via what he calls modernist, postmodernist and biological theories and practices of architecture. He concludes with a reaffirmation of the Sartrian conception of the self that allows for an understanding of the self as an active agent that has close symbiotic relationship with social and cultural context rather than preordained by a presumed universal essence. In Kuzu's own words; "If we want to understand the true essence of architecture we have to be informed by a philosophical approach that conceptualizes the self as an active agent whose existence cannot be preceded by essence. The question I asked in the beginning of this paper was not whether architecture could be thought of as being independent from the context in which it occurs. Rather, what I questioned was whether architecture is a reflection of the self that is dominantly defined by the context that informs its existence or it is also an opportunity for the self to epitomize its creative existence, one that cannot be explained merely as bounded by the contextual time and space. My position happens to be in favor of the latter. In the words of Susan Herrington 'an explanation of its materials, modes of production and representations cannot account for an ontol-

ogy of [architecture]'" (p. 87). Relating this insight to the sociological self-explorations by UMass Boston students as briefly summarized above, one can note how in each of such analyses we encounter inquiring selves that do not study society, or apply sociological theory, merely to explain how they were shaped by their differing social and familial contexts of fear mongering, of marriage/divorce or success myths, of traditional mono-culture growing ups, or of ADD or fatherhood challenges or stereotypes, but also learn to oppose the "me"s with the possibility of spontaneous and creative "I"s or self agencies that do not have to follow the dictates of "social context" but can alternatively be architects of their own lives and society.

Kuzu's theoretical intervention, in other words, is a challenge to deterministic and conventional views of society, and of sociology, which one-sidedly focus on the social determination of knowledge, of the arts, and of architecture as a spatial art. By inserting the self back into society as an active agent, Kuzu reaffirms activist theorizations and praxes of society and sociology that allow for the self to play a transformative role in reshaping social reality (including the self agent, one must add) and of architecture as both an expression of and a catalyst for such a transformative process—*despite* the social context. In this light, Kuzu's formulation may be interpreted to lay an emphasis on activist conceptions of Millsian sociological imagination, by moving beyond passive interpretation of the latter (i.e., of understanding personal troubles in terms of public issues), to also take into consideration how personal troubles can become passionately experienced causes of and catalysts for transformative engagements with public issues—as illustrated in particular by Ellen Maher's sharing of her study of growing up with ADD.

The two master's theses from Bangor University, UK, by Shahram Rafeian and Sima Atarodi, conducted under the supervi-

sion of their advisor Steven Hosier, may appear to conventional and rigid sociologists looking for easy and manifest indices of sociological relevance to belong only to the discipline of psychology rather than that of sociology as well. After all, there are hardly any references to the well-known sociologists and their works and theories in the two master's theses. However, if we consider seriously any of the explorations and imaginative self and sociological theorizations conducted by UMass Boston graduate students Ireland, Siegfriedt, K.R., Lazcano, Maher, or Melia as well as that by Kuzu from LSEPS, we would find ourselves attuned to the significant sociological relevance and implications of the studies carried out by Rafeian and Atarodi.

In his master's thesis entitled, "Dissociative Experiences in Health and Disease," Shahram Rafeian, MD with an MA in psychology, who is now beginning his doctoral studies in sociology and social policy at Bangor University, UK, explores the history of the concept of dissociation in scholarship, starting from the ideas of the French "psychologist, philosopher and medical doctor," Pierre Janet who maintained that, "it is possible for a group of thoughts, feelings and memories to become dissociated from the mainstream consciousness of the person and function independently" (p. 89). Rafeian describes how the idea of dissociation, which was present in the works of Morton Price, William James, and Carl Jung, was sidelined for a while with the advent of Freudian psychoanalysis and Skinnerian behaviorism, to be later resurrected in the neodissociation theory of Ernest Hilgard in the context of the need for treating psychological traumas resulting from WWII by means of hypnosis (p. 89). Rafeian's study involves efforts to understand the nature of hypnosis and dissociation in relation to one another, on the one hand, and to distinguish between pathological and "normal" experiences of hypnosis and dissociation, on the other. These

distinctions or commonalities serve to highlight the fact that experiences of hypnotic trance and dissociation in what is regarded as waking states amid everyday life are common—leading Rafeian, as related to this editor separately, to a growing sociological interest in the problem of human agency in favor of social change. If trance-like states made possible by dissociative experiences are common and "normal" parts of our everyday life, in other words, should not that lead us to question how we can awaken ourselves to such automated and subconscious functionings of our inner and broader social structures (including academic and "disciplinary" ones—one must add), in favor of more conscious and intentional intervention in shaping the architecture of our inner selves and broader social landscapes?

Sima Atarodi, MD with an MA in psychology, pursues in her master's thesis entitled "Trauma in Mind and Pain the Body: Mind-Body Interactions in Psychogenic Pain" a similar inquiry as the one above, but from a seemingly different angle. Her interest lies in understanding those types of physical pain for which there is no apparent physical cause. Her study leads her to argue that the best, and perhaps only, way to understand and heal such types of pain is to apply a biopsychosocial model through which the "physical" nature of the pain is organically studied in the context of the individual's psychological and social life. Using such a conceptual framework would make it possible to understand how the individual's efforts to cope with severe social or psychological trauma become dissociated from the latter two factors, and become subconsciously sedimented in a repressed self that independently experiences psychosomatic symptoms such as psychogenic pain. According to Atarodi, "Actually when a person encounters unacceptable and unbearable events, it evokes unpleasant emotions like anger and fear. If the person cannot accept

and express these emotions, as a defensive mechanism, the memory of them becomes dissociated from mainstream consciousness and are suppressed in the person's unconscious. They are consolidated in the procedural memory and traumatize the person. Every physical, emotional and somatosensory stimulus that can remind the unconscious memory of the trauma will reactivate the pain experience" (p. 111).

Atarodi's search for a more comprehensive model, as also shared by Rafieian as briefly summarized above, necessarily encourages us to move beyond dissociated disorders and hypnosis of rigid disciplinarity. When they voice a deep-seated desire to expand their knowledges from the conventional sciences of medicine as already trained medical doctors to include sociological and social psychological sciences, this should be welcomed as a sign of rigor and seriousness in pursuit of science. For those who are open to entertain the truth of the inherently arbitrary and socially constructed nature of the academic disciplines, and how their taken-for-granted and habitual dissociations from one another actually limit scientific inquiry and findings of respective specialized fields, it should not be surprising to recognize the underlying commonness of theme and purpose across all the studies published in this issue of *Human Architecture*.