

Culture and Identity

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Review Essay:

Ayan Kaya (2001). "Sicher in Kreuzberg": Constructing Diasporas: Turkish Hip-Hop Youth in Berlin. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 236 pages (English), ISBN 3-933127-71-8 (paperback), 30.80 EUR

Carl Ratner (2002). Cultural Psychology: Theory and Method. New York: Kluwer/Plenum, 230 pages, ISBN 0-306-46660-0 (hardcover), 64.00 EUR / 55.00 USD / 39.00 GBP, ISBN 3-89334-363-6 (paperback), 68.00 SFR / 35.00 EUR

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Abstract: Francisco VARELA (1996) suggested that the ultimate tests of scientific theories are their ability to explain our personal experience. Although *Sicher in Kreuzberg* and *Cultural Psychology* are about culture and identity, I found both books silent about experiences of the Self in everyday praxis. Drawing on activity theory and reflexive phenomenological hermeneutics as method and praxis, I provide interpenetrating accounts of analysis of my autobiographical experiences of cultural and identity on the one hand and of *Sicher in Kreuzberg* and *Cultural Psychology* on the other. Whereas I highly recommend the first book I am much less convinced by the soundness and usefulness of the second.

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1. Preface

From the perspective of a reflexive phenomenological hermeneutic, understanding (*Verstehen*) and explaining (*Erklären*) stand in a dialectical relation (RICŒUR 1991). Reading a book, analyzing and explaining its structural features and content presuppose understanding (*Verstehen*); but the development of understanding presupposes explaining and the structural analysis it involves. Understanding is required to follow a story and explaining is required "when spontaneous understanding is impeded" (p.142). [1]

How then does one come to understand and read two books on culture and identity, cultural theory and activity theory, diaspora and racism? How does one write an analysis of the two books that not only accounts for the dialectical relation of understanding and explaining but that also embodies it in its very structure the very theory that underpins it—according to the dictum that the medium is the message (McLUHAN 1995)? Such questions could be stifling perhaps even stopping one from writing at all because of the chicken-and-egg problem that they pose, especially when we ponder for too long. Yet in a dialectical worldview, contradictions and aporias are allowed and expected to be central to our human condition. From a pragmatic perspective, one never ponders too long, for "meanwhile, everything begins" (SERRES 2000, p.56), always and already set in motion by the very condition that also allows us to think ourselves and the world that surrounds us. [2]

My review, as everything, also begins, perhaps twice (see 2.1), intertwining understanding and explaining, wandering (using autobiography in analysis and analysis in autobiography) and putting in opposition (facing columns), autobiographical narrative and critical analysis, one requiring the other, impossible without the other, even analytically inseparable from the other. Understanding and explaining are enfolded into one another, close and yet distant as the different parts of the trajectory of a fly or two randomly chosen pieces in the dough of a baker (PRIGOGINE 1979, SERRES 1983). And yet, while I am writing, I realize that the story I really want and have to write is an "impossible" (DERRIDA 1998, p.7) story, one that is impossible to compose. In its completion, this story, the one you are reading right now, remains fundamentally incomplete, not in the least because it takes your own understanding and explaining to complete. This text itself is a testimony of the interaction between understanding, always mine, and the texts I read, always the others'; the text is a coming together and interaction of Self and Other. [3]

2. Introduction

2.1 Meanwhile, everything begins

I am citizen of a country, in which politicians and citizens use "multiculturalism" as a source of pride, an accomplishment, and a project. I speak French at home. In Vancouver, one of the country's biggest cities, a language other than one of the two national languages (English, French) is spoken in more than 50% of homes. Not only is Vancouver ethnically diverse but people increasingly report multiethnic origins. According to the 1996 census, over 38% of the population in the Greater Vancouver District reported more than one ethnic origin. In several municipalities, the number of individuals reporting multiple ethnic origins exceeds 50%. [4]

What characterizes this new breed of people, those that marry across traditional cultural boundaries and the children that issue from such unions? Who are we, as a culture? Who are we, as persons? Who am I? Or, who do others understand me to be after reading the autobiographical notes? What is the culture in reference to which my identity is being constructed? What is the value of the notion of culture, as in cultural psychology, cultural anthropology, or cultural sociology in a world that is increasingly characterized by is syncretism, bricolage of culture and bricolage of identity? Perhaps even the notion of bricolage has to be temporalized, leading to identities that are continuously made and remade, in and being result of practical activity, in a bricolage fashion from the structural resources at hand (ROTH et al. in press). [5]

Questions about culture and how it mediates identity are complex, and for those who have never spent time in another culture, comprise hidden dimensions. On the other hand, those who have moved between cultures, whether as individuals or living as minority or in a diaspora, often speak of the tremendous personal struggles involved along the lines of ethnicity, language, and the like. Although the authors of the following two poem excerpts are from quite different cultures and have had quite different trajectories across cultures, their experiences share some common features. In the poem "Search for my tongue" (BHATT 1988, pp.65-66), addresses the battle between the different tongues in her mouth, the mother tongue that begins to rot while the foreign tongue could never be known.

You ask me what I mean
by saying I have lost my tongue.
I ask you, what would you do
if you had two tongues in your mouth,
and you lost the first one, the mother tongue,
and could not really know the other,
the foreign tongue.
You could not use them both together
even if you thought that way.

And if you lived in a place you had to
speak a foreign tongue,

your mother tongue would rot,
rot and die in your mouth
until you had to spit it out. [6]

The poet had left her native Gujarat and moved to the United States where she received her masters degree in English and, though she moved to and now lives in Germany, she continued to write in English and Gujarati. "Being bi-cultural," so the text on the back cover suggests, "is a mixed blessing," for being attached to both cultures, BHATT cannot do without either. A similar experience transpires from the poem "Doppelmann" by the Turkish-German Zafer SENOCAK (1984, p.102). He too writes about the two worlds within him that pull him in different directions, neither being whole, the split between them running right through his tongue.

ich habe meine Füße zwei Planeten
wenn sie sich in Bewegung setzen
zerren sie mich mit
ich falle

ich trage zwei Welten in mir
aber keine ist ganz
sie bluten ständig

die Grenze verläuft
mitten durch meine Zunge

ich rüttele daran wie ein Häftling
das Spiel an einer Wunde¹ [7]

Both of these poems, as testimonies of a bi-cultural, or shall we say, trans-cultural experience, suggest that the movement from one cultural context, understood in language and perhaps ethnic terms, is associated with struggles of identity, knowing who we are when the cultural referents are changing. But my own experience of moving between cultures was different. I deeply feel, and think of myself, as Canadian, involving all the sensibilities that are often attributed to them in the context of multicultural society and the tolerance for others, in "othering the other" (KAYA, p.108), that go with it. I do not feel split but rather, after having lived the two halves of my life in Germany and Canada, feel in a foreign country when I visit Germany. I hear and presumably comprehend what people say, but do no longer understand. I have a command of English that I never had of German, though it was my mother's tongue, the kind of tongue that BHATT cannot seem to spit out, and which continues to grow back. [8]

VARELA (1996) suggested that the true test of a (natural) science is individual experience. If we use this dictum, a good cultural theory of identity and personal experience should be able to explain the rather different experiences expressed by BHATT and SENOCAK, on the one hand, and my own experience, on the

1 The translation goes about like this: I have my feet, two planets/when they begin to move/they drag me with them/I am falling//I carry two worlds within me/ but neither one is whole/they're continuously bleeding//the border runs/right through the middle of my tongue//Like a prisoner I am shaking it/the play with a wound. KAYA (p.204) quotes the middle part of this poem, which he knew through SUHR (1989).

other. Because I know my own experience better than the two poets', I will follow VARELA and use it as a test bed for the two books that I have read, and which constituted the starting point of this inquiry. Thus, my autobiographical reflections emerged from my encounter with the two books, but the review of the two books necessarily emerged from the encounter of the books with me, *this* reader. The two texts (Section 3 versus Sections 4 and 5) emerged together, simultaneously, as products of the dialectic of this particular reader and the text; these texts are similar but they are also different, interacting with one another. To represent the parallel genesis and nature of the two texts, I chose to place them in two columns, both facing one another and Janus-like heading into different directions. "I have my feet, two planets/ when they begin to move/ they drag me with them" (SENOCAK 1984, p.102). [9]

When these texts are facing one another or rather, seem to look in different directions, I encourage readers to also read across the column, experience how the two texts, which are also one, talk, interpenetrate, co-inform, and relate to one another. The additional work that this requires of reading is, in my view, directly related to the work accomplished in separating the testimony of lived experience, autobiography, from critical reflection on the texts authored by the other and by othering the other. [10]

But these two texts also interpenetrate, irremediably bound up with one another forming one text, clearly in Sections 1, 2, and 6, but also in Sections 3, 4, and 5. In fact, these two texts form a dialectical unit even when they pretend to be separate and facing one another. [11]

2.2 Culture, activity, and identity

Traditionally, cultures were approached as something stable, fixed, centered and coherent. Even Michelle and Renato ROSALDO subscribed for a long time to culture as something stable ("if it's moving, it isn't cultural" [ROSALDO 1989, p.209]). Parallel to this approach to culture is the treatment of identity as stable, fixed, centered and coherent. Although suggesting that the real character of the roles persons take are a function of the concrete activity and therefore must be empirically ascertained, *Cultural Psychology* in fact promotes a stance in which culture and personality are changing little and slowly: "Culture is a system of enduring behavioral and thinking patterns that are created, adopted, and promulgated by a number of individuals jointly. These patterns are social (supraindividual) rather than individual, and they are artefactual rather than natural" (RATNER, p.9). Thus, RATNER cites correlational studies that link socioeconomic status and IQ and other factors, all treated as being independent of the particular situation; similarly, he proposes to use interviews as a way of accessing moral reasoning using textually presented dilemmas and assuming that the reasoning exhibited shows the true person (Chapter 6). This view constitutes a holistic notion, culture as a "highly integrated and grasped static 'whole'" (KAYAN, p.33), and developed as the dominant paradigm of classical modernity and the nation state (territoriality). This notion of culture as static has come increasingly under scrutiny, and, *Sicher in Kreuzberg* (feeling safe in

Kreuzberg [Kreuzberg is a part of former West-Berlin known for its run-down housing and its counter culture of intellectuals and non-German immigrants]) is but one case study that shows the shortcomings of the holistic notion—I believe that our Canadian experience detailed below is another counter example. [12]

The alternative to a holistic perspective is a syncretic notion of culture, which "claims that mixing and bricolage are the main characteristics of cultures" (KAYAN, p.35). Cultures therefore do not develop along (ethnically, politically) absolute, fixed lines but in complex dynamic patterns of syncretism. [13]

It has been noted that a lot of confusion in cultural studies arises from the fact that the notion culture is used in incommensurate ways (SEWELL 1999).² On the one hand, culture is a theoretical construct that must be abstracted from social life and is to be distinguished from biology, politics, or economy, that is, things that are not culture. On the other hand, culture(s) is (are) used to refer to identifiable subgroups, using the notion isomorphic with society or, more recently, community (of practice). Here the distinction is between cultures rather than between culture and not-culture. In my reading, RATNER is using the notion of culture more in the first sense whereas KAYA is using it in the second. [14]

Two main concepts of culture can be distinguished in the scholarly literature between the 1960s and the 1990s (SEWELL 1999). On the one hand, there was culture as a system of symbols of meaning, a view championed and promulgated by Clifford GEERTZ (e.g., 1973) but also, and in a different, linguistically oriented way by Claude LEVI-STRAUSS (e.g., 1958). The main point of this approach is to disentangle what is viewed as cultural, symbols and meaning, from those things that are not-cultural, biological, technological, geographic etc. influences. On the other hand, there was the view of culture as practice, which is, in other words, an emphasis of the performative aspects of culture. *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (LAVE & WENGER 1991) provides a theoretical framework for understanding culture as practice, including the performative aspects of the reproduction of culture. That is, the performative approach to culture highlighted the performative dimensions in cultural transformation and stasis, whereas the system-of-meaning approach explained well the perennial aspects and effects of culture but had little to say about cultural transformation. BOURDIEU's (1990) theory of practice, which highlighted the homology of habitus, structured structuring dispositions, and cultural field, was heavily criticized for the overemphasis on cultural reproduction and its lack of generative dimensions (e.g., SEWELL 1992). [15]

The most recent theoretical approaches combine the structural and the performative dimensions into a dialectic unit of structure and agency (SEWELL 1999). Such an approach has been useful, for example, in the analysis and explanation of cultural extension in the sciences, which arises as a product of the dialectical tension between (material, social) resistance and accommodation (PICKERING 1995). Accordingly, human beings, inherently imbued with agency

2 LEVI-STRAUSS (1958, pp.77-78) already discussed existing problems in anthropology that arose from the confusion of the two notions of culture.

(HOLZKAMP 1983) draw on structures that are located within themselves (as schema) and in the social and material world for the active production of cognitive and material outcomes (SEWELL 1992). Activity theory—initially articulated by MARXian (social) psychologists in the former Soviet Union (e.g., LEONT'EV 1978) and further developed largely in Scandinavian countries in recent years (e.g., ENGESTRÖM, MIETTINEN & PUNAMÄKI 1999)—can be understood in terms of the dialectic of structure and agency because it already contained these elements. More than other theories, however, activity theory highlights the mediated nature of the relation between the agent and his or her object generally by other material and social structures, including production means, community, rules, and division of labor. [16]

Different activity systems are characterized by different ideologies, different cultures. Thus, many scholars are unanimous about the fact that (North American) schools embody middle-class culture (GEE in press). Students from the middle class, being endowed with sufficient relevant cultural capital, will succeed in this environment; students with different cultural capital, one that has currency in the working- and underclasses that they come from, will fail to succeed, if the measure of success is taken in terms of grades and access to university (ECKERT 1989). Individuals who participate in different activity systems therefore participate in systems characterized by different values, culture. Their identities, therefore, have to be understood in terms of the bricolage that they accomplish, continuously, in both maintaining and transforming identity. [17]

In the past, social research has often dissociated culture and psychology. Culture was used to articulate the relations of humans to their environment in the context of indigenous, foreign, and strange culture, whereas psychology was reserved for the relation of "modern" humans to their industrialized environments. Little over a decade ago, one anthropologist noted that

"Social analysts commonly speak, for example, as if 'we' have psychology and 'they' have culture. Current discussions about the cultural reasons that other cultures 'somatize' (experience 'their' afflictions in bodily ways) must be understood in relation to the unstated norm that human beings should 'psychologize' (as Anglo-Americans, or at any rate their therapists, presumably do)." (ROSALDO 1989, p.202) [18]

In addition, the human subject engaged in activity is treated as relatively stable; their identities do not seem to change and therefore constitute static phenomena similar to culture. This is also the approach represented in *Cultural Psychology*, which provides methodological advice about how to get at stable cultural psychological features—for example, there is little discussion how the cultural psychology of the Holocaust has arisen historically and how it disappeared. Viewing identities as static is problematic, as process analyses show—for example, the development of an identity as a member of alcoholics anonymous or becoming a Mayan midwife (LAVE & WENGER 1991). Here, identities are neither to be seen as something completed nor as ontological categories that a person takes into a situation. As the converse side of production in activity systems, identity is something that is continuously made and remade in activity; it

is a being in continuous becoming (ROTH et al. in press). It arises from the dialectic of how we experience ourselves and how others experience us; in regard to ethnicity, KAYA (p.42) suggests that "identity is the product of a dialogical and dialectical process involving internal and external opinions and processes ... what you think your ethnicity is versus what they think your ethnicity is." Personal identity should therefore be as much an outcome of syncretic processes just as culture is an outcome of such processes.

"According to convention, I am not simply what I am doing now. I am also what I have done, and my conventionally edited version of my past is made to seem almost more the real 'me' than what I am at this moment. For what I *am* seems so fleeting and intangible, but what I was is fixed and final. It is the firm basis for predictions of what I will be in the future, and so it comes about that I am more closely identified with what no longer exists than with what actually is." (WATTS 1957, p.6) [19]

To me, theorizing identity as a dialectical entity, incorporating the contradiction between sameness and selfhood, is the currently most convincing approach (RICŒUR 1990). Identity is dialectical, because it always asserts sameness in the face of difference. This can be seen already in the case of examples that appear rather mundane and unquestionable, such as simple arithmetic. For example, identity is ascertained ("=") in the equation $2 + 3 = 3 + 2$ (or $2 \times 3 = 3 \times 2$), despite glaring differences—neither the signs are the same (e.g., different ink points) nor is their order once the sameness of the "2" and "3" appearing on the left and the "3" and "2" appearing on the right has been ascertained. That there in fact is an identity is because of the distributive nature of whole numbers with respect to addition. [20]

This identity is not given when the items combined are two operations such as "flip around horizontal axis through center" (a) and "counter-clockwise rotation" (b). As Figure 1 shows, $a + b$ (Figure 1.i) does not give the same result as $b + a$ (Figure 1.ii)—the triangle ends up in different orientations. (Mathematically inclined individuals represent the actions in terms of matrices **A** (flip) and **B** (rotate), which operate on some object such as vector x . During introductory lessons on linear algebra, one quickly learns that $\mathbf{A} \cdot \mathbf{B} \underline{x}$ not equal $\mathbf{B} \cdot \mathbf{A} \underline{x}$.)

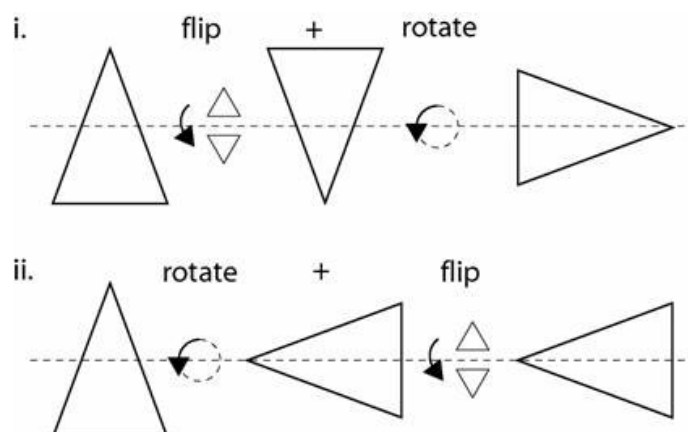


Figure 1: An example showing that the commutative nature of addition or multiplication in the domain of natural numbers cannot be generalized to other domains. Here, a reflection on the horizontal axis followed by a counter-clockwise rotation is not the same as a counter-clockwise rotation followed by reflection on the same axis in the domain of triangles (for a circle, it would be the same given the axes of reflection and rotation both go through the center). [21]

Turning to the identity of human beings, the concepts that we develop need to be able to account for the fact that we experience the sense of sameness (the fifty year old adult pointing to a picture saying "this is me when I was five") and the sense of difference (the Nazi perpetrators described by RATNER, who were loving and protecting with their children, but who turned into barbaric killing machines at work in the concentration camp). [22]

3. Lived and Constructed Cultural Identity: Autobiography

I am interested in identity, not the construct, but identity as a lived experience. In this sense, it is a dialectical construct, for it involves change and permanence. Changes occur both on the short scale, such as when a person leaves the dreary job on the assembly line, comes home and becomes a (loving, violent, etc.) father and/or husband. Changes occur on longer scales, such as when a child becomes a teenager, an adult, who in turn becomes teacher, principal, and superintendent. But there is also a sense of constancy, when, going through an old photo album, we tell our children "this is me when I was your

4. Cultural Psychology

4.1 Content and structure

Cultural Psychology is divided into two parts: theory (Part 1) and method (Part 2). Throughout the book, RATNER declares his commitments to activity theory, which he grounds largely in his reading of the older VYGOTSKY and LEONT'EV, leaving out other more recent developments such as that by ENGESTRÖM and others on the topic (e.g., ENGESTRÖM, MIETINNEN & PUNAMÄKI 1999) and completely failing to address the developments this theory has undergone in the hands of German critical psychology. In *Cultural Psychology from the Perspective of Activity Theory* (Chapter

age." This sentence, in its contradiction, encompasses the dialectic nature of identity and Self. [23]

3.1 Pluricultural experiences and identity

I have lived (or stayed for longer periods) in many countries. I have roomed, befriended, married etc. individuals from many cultures, ethnicities, mother tongues, social classes, and so on. I have repeatedly lived in poverty (there was not enough money to buy butter or meat, we never bought meat other than Christmas, when the highlight of the year was a couple of slices of ham for me, and wieners for my brothers and sister). These experiences certainly are part of my biography but they cannot be determinate factors that forever predetermine who I am and who I can be. Thus sometimes my sensitivities are more European than North American—I find Bill CLINTON's penis and François MITTERAND's extramarital life are personal rather than public matters—and in other situations they are more North American—I enact a pragmatic approach to research. I am more sensitive to others' needs for saving face, typical of the Canadian West Coast culture, than to the need to express my perspective, which my German and French acquaintances refer to as saying the truth. I notice that I have sensitivities

1), the results of many (quantitative) studies are cited to support the claim that culture and psychology are, in fact, inseparable. Correspondingly, there are subsections that deal with the influence of cultural activities, artifacts, and concepts, on the one hand, and psychological phenomena, on the other. There is a subsection in which the author articulates not a one-way dependency between the variables just articulated but that there exists, in fact, a dialectical relationship among cultural activities, artifacts, concepts, and psychological phenomena. Finally, there is a section in which the topic of agency, a concept central to recent discussions in the social sciences and always held in dialectical relation to structure. [57]

In the second chapter, individualistic approaches to agency, those that treat psychological phenomena independent of culture, are merely sketched in strawperson fashion and then (viciously) attacked. In fact, if I had not committed to do the review, I would have abandoned my reading at this point, given that my quick glances into subsequent chapters had led to even greater disappointments. I did not appreciate the personal nature of the attacks. Reading the text felt like the author had an axe to grind with other scholars rather than dealing with issues. For example, *Cultural Psychology* takes multi-authored

that are said to be British, and also Canadian. In scholarly books and papers, I dislike adjectives that highlight, what I feel to be in an exaggerated way, the point or fact that the author wants to make. (Carl RATNER uses many of those [KAYA some] so that I was asking about the cultural context within which he was writing that might have led him to spike his text.) From my perspective, there are no clear causal cultural patterns in who I am. Traits that others attribute to a German identity can easily be rejected because none of my siblings ever showed them despite having been brought up in the same cultural and familial context. [24]

But who am I? What is my cultural identity? I speak three languages rather fluently, but I speak all three with an accent. My principal language is English, but the slight German accent that I had lost at some stage reappeared when, after a lapse of three years, I returned to speaking French at home. (Did my mother tongue grow back?) Sometimes people guess that it must be a French accent; others believe it to be German. My French has an accent that is non-English, but not really German either. My German has a strong accent of North American (my brother says "Yankee") origin. [25]

Through traveling, I came to realize that it is not nations or ethnicities that matter

studies and attributes them to only one or the other author who then becomes the strawperson. In the case of BRANCO and VALSINER (1997), the second author is constructed as the object of attack, whereas in the case of BRUNER and AMSTERDAM (2000), the first author becomes the target. The different targets (including Jerome BRUNER, Sylvia SCRIBNER, Jaan VALSINER) are then summarily denoted as "individualists," and many statements are made about them as a group irrespective of their considerable differences. [58]

I am not fond of directing the critique of issues at authors as persons.

"Valsiner's antagonism between individual agency and culturally constructed, shared activities rests on a belief that culture is toxic to individual autonomy and fulfillment" (p.80). Not only do I find it difficult to accept that persons "hold" beliefs like they "hold" wallets in their hands, beliefs that can be accessed by means of interviews independent of the particular activities in which individuals act, but also do I question how individual beliefs can be attributed from a collectively produced artifact (here the jointly-authored article). The statements made contradict the framework that supposedly undergirds the work. [59]

Part 2 (*Method*) of *Cultural Psychology* contains four chapters that deal with

but the behavior of people in face-to-face interactions; there were nice individuals with whom one could get easily along and be friends independent of ethnicity, religious affiliation, or class, and there were others with whom one could not get along independent of ethnicity, religious affiliation, or class. [26]

My family, especially on my mother's side, consists of travelers in foreign lands, visiting, living, or working in countries other than the one (Germany) where they had grown up. Although they eventually returned to Germany, my parents had met while emigrating to Canada and eventually married there and began a family. Two uncles spent nearly a decade working in Alaska and the Canadian Territories, an aunt worked for two years in what was then called Persia. [27]

When I was seven, I too began spending my summer holidays camping in Italy, later Spain and Yugoslavia, France, and many other European countries. During international rowing competitions, I met and talked to individuals from the former Soviet Block, talking with them about the advantages and disadvantages of living in societies ruled by communist parties. At the same time and as late as the early seventies, I met people, my age and born long after the Third Reich had eclipsed, who despised me, as all

the implications of activity theory for cultural psychological research (Chapter 3), Interviewing techniques for eliciting cultural-psychological information (Chapter 4), A procedure or analyzing cultural themes in verbal accounts (Chapter 5), and an empirical investigation into the cultural psychology of children's moral reasoning (Chapter 6). [60]

Individually and taken together, these chapters do not add new content to the methodological literature. Rather, they more or less present an argument for specific quantitative and qualitative methods that can be used to establish the truth and the objective means to obtain it. Throughout Chapter 3, we find statements about the rigor that needs to characterize this search for truth, including aspects of truth that the research subjects are not aware of themselves. [61]

4.2 Some points of critique

I wondered about the rhetorical work to be accomplished by the proliferation of adjectives that in other context (e.g., APA journals, British and British-like cultures) would be considered as exaggerations. I cite several instances from the discussion of a qualitative study on the Holocaust: "A remarkably *clear* and *skillful* application of qualitative methodology to cultural psychology is Goldhagen's (1996)

Germans, old and young for the Nazi atrocities and World War II as if I had inherited this new instance of the original sin (Ursünde). [28]

Because our experiences form our bodies and more precisely, the very dispositions that are at the origin of our patterned ways of perceiving and acting in the world (BOURDIEU 1997), all these experiences within and across cultures should be resources in my actions, including the way I talk and write about identity and in the way I read the books I review. This would be consistent with identity as a process and product of bricolage. But if this is so, the cultural psychological dialectical other pole would be that of culture as syncretic entity. [29]

3.2 Racism: Markers of difference

In fifth and sixth grade, I had a friend Joseph from an influential German-Jewish family (today, he too is a leader of the German Jewish community); because I was from out of town attending Gymnasium (university preparatory, grammar school), I spent at least one afternoon in his family, eating lunch with them. Before the war, they had owned an entire street in a small town that I knew because my father had lived there for a while. For me, being Jewish meant that families had suffered, lost their property which often wasn't reinstated afterwards, but

research on the psychology of the Holocaust" (p.123), "Goldhagen *vividly* describes ..." (p.123), "Goldhagen employs his *powerful* analytic skills ..." (p.124), "Goldhagen identifies anti-Semitism as the cultural core of the perpetrators' psychology by employing a *powerful logical* analysis" (p.125), "His conclusions are convincing, because they logically mesh with the date" (p.126) and so on, throughout the book. [62]

The particular section from which I drew these quotes is interesting because it struck me, upon first reading, as an exaggerated recount of claims about the Holocaust and the cultural psychology that gave rise to and supported it. Not that I want to debate the historical evidence about the prosecution of Jews during the Third Reich—I have always been highly incredulous and even abhorred by the claims of certain individuals that the Holocaust has not happened. Yet for several pages, we encounter claims of the following nature without the appropriate data to support them.

"They enthusiastically hunted out the Jews from hiding places when they could have searched less diligently and allowed the Jews to remain hidden. The soldiers walked into hospitals and shot sick Jews in their beds... Many perpetrators each shot hundreds of Jews in a day and then

it also meant eating and drinking, going to school, learning just as I did. There was no difference. (I still have a photograph of Joseph and myself during carnival, dressed up as cowboy and Indian.) [30]

Since then, I have lived or stayed with people of different ethnic backgrounds, including Asian, North American Indian, African American, and Europeans from different nations. Since coming to Victoria, the students and postdoctoral fellows in my laboratory have come from Canada, Russia, Brazil, Singapore, Denmark, Germany, Japan, and Korea. [31]

But there are markers of difference that are used in the "othering" of others. Racism appears deeply embodied not only in German law (see KAYA's [pp.58-64] discussion of the German *Grundgesetz* [constitution] and *Ausländergesetz* [law concerning foreigners]) but in the everyday reactions of people. [32]

3.2.1 Language: *Between and within*

I remember the train stations as meeting places for *Gastarbeiter*; there appeared to be more *Gastarbeiter* at the train stations meeting in their different groups and according to country of origin than travelers of German origin. I remember my secret fears, coming from the otherness of

resumed slaughtering hundreds more the next day. During time away from killings, the perpetrators enjoyed life and were undisturbed by having slaughtered hundreds and thousands of victims." (RATNER, p.124) [63]

As I was reading statements such as these, I thought that the same sentences could be used or some variation to describe the actions of Jewish soldiers in the West Bank and Gaza or American soldiers in Korea, Vietnam, and Afghanistan. It would have helped to elucidate the core ideas of cultural psychology by means of a comparative analysis of these phenomena, how some people in each culture can commit such atrocities, whereas others, in the same cultural context, do not participate in it. We have all seen the innocent victims, non-soldiers in Korea, Vietnam, and Afghanistan. Currently we follow the occupation of Palestine, the senseless destruction of Palestinian national infrastructures, and the killing of innocent civilians and children. How the armies, as subcultures, and soldiers, as individuals, could ever participate in these equivalent atrocities is an interesting question that cultural psychology should attempt to answer. [64]

To me, *Cultural Psychology* is not convincing, because I read the texts that appeared in different parts as

others, people who I could not communicate with because they did not speak German and I did not speak their language. Having to navigate the many groups of differently speaking people filled me, as many others, with a sense of fear, of not being at home. Train stations were the key meeting places. Having to take a train on the weekend and making it through the crowds of Gastarbeiter caused in me, and others, a sense of insecurity and feelings of not being safe. *Sicher in Kreuzberg* is the emblematic title of the book; feeling safe we could almost everywhere in Germany other than the train stations. Such feelings continue to this day: Germans from other districts feel alienated in Kreuzberg (KAYA, p.139). But this is no different in many parts of the US: in certain parts of U.S. cities, it is dangerous for a middle-class person, or anyone for that matter, to walk, especially at night. In West Philadelphia where I participate conducting research on schooling of mostly African American youths living in poverty, every walk through their neighborhood is potentially dangerous. Their 'hood (short for neighborhood) is an important referent for who they are, their identity (ROTH et al. in press)—doing scientific studies of the trash or pollution in the neighborhood is an aggression to their identity (TOBIN 2000). Where I live now, I have overheard many conversations involving people of different origin, socio-economic status

inconsistent. The statement that behavior such as the Holocaust was "complex, irrational, unusual, mind-boggling" seems to go against the very purpose of cultural psychology, namely to develop an intricate understanding of why people do what they do, and how culture mediates their actions. Qualifiers such "complex, irrational, unusual, mind-boggling" (aren't these the same descriptors people around the world use for G. W. BUSH?) can be made about the practices in many cultures, always from the outside, but this does not testify for an approach that attempts to understand individual choices and the affordances and constraints of the context that are the dialectical opposites to the psychological structures, a dialectical relation from which emerge the behaviors. Can the opposition of the same cultural and psychological structures explain the atrocities committed by American and Jewish soldiers against innocent civilians or are other pairs of contexts and psychological structures that need to be constructed? Are atrocities the outcome of different constellations of structures in the habitus and field? It appeared to me that the rhetorical function of the intensifying adjectives was to make readers buy into the claims, based on the authority of text, which not only made claims, but over-emphasized the quality of the process that had led to the statements. [65]

(and women) that "feeling safe" is something that you can almost everywhere, much more so than in any other part of the world. [33]

Differences along the lines of language were made not only between languages, the mother tongue (German) and everything else but also within the language. In those days, traveling 200 kilometers, Munich to Stuttgart or Frankfurt to Cologne could mean that one did no longer understand, because the local dialects were so different. But there were even differences between neighboring villages so that people could say from which village another person was even if they did not know him or her. [34]

Sicher in Kreuzberg evoked many memories in me, sometimes through the simple use of a word. One of these was "Aussiedler," which is defined as "ethnic Germans who repatriate from Eastern Europe; resettlers" (KAYA, p.216). As a student (because of my poverty status), I was able to live in social housing, mostly inhabited by "Aussiedler" (expatriates who, often after many generations, had come back to their *Heimat* [homeland]) and "Flüchtlinge" (Germans who had left the eastern territories in advance of the Russian army). Many acquaintances did not understand why I would live in housing units with a predominant number of *Aussiedler* as residents. The

To me, many methodological recommendations made in *Cultural Psychology* appeared highly problematic and inconsistent with the theoretical framework that it establishes in the first chapter. For example, the text makes a great deal about interviews as a means of exploring cultural psychological issues. But interviews are inherently problematic in terms of an activity theoretical framework as I understand and use it, for they constitute a different activity system from the ones that the interviewees (subjects in other activity systems) are being interviewed about (BOURDIEU 1997). Thus, being asked questions about family violence constitutes a very different activity system than life in the family where certain patterns of interaction occur. The bearing of the talk about patterns of interaction (activity system is interview) and the patterns of interaction (activity system is family) has to be established empirically through the inquiry rather than being taken for granted.

"But [an agent who possesses a practical mastery] is no better placed to perceive what really governs his practice and to bring it to the order of discourse, than the observer, who has the advantage over him of being able to see the action from outside, as an object, and especially of being able to totalize the successive realizations of

use of "Aussiedler" and "Flüchtlinge" was just as derogatory as it was when Germans used them in the context of the changed foods available after World War II, such as "Flüchtlingswurst," sausages of the type (more spiced) that the displaced Germans had brought with them and introduced to the west. My grandfather, a well-educated and well-traveled person used this notion, an expression both of his individual as well as his cultural positioning. The notion of "Aussiedler" was negative even when used to denote a farmer (family) who had built a farm outside the village proper among their fields. That is, the prefix "aus" (out, away) invites the connotation of "outside of normal" and "away from [the community]," that is, of people who no longer wanted to live with others, in community and communion. [35]

3.2.2 *Tastes and smells*

Racism sits deep. Garlic was an object that marked difference, more or less foreign to the German kitchens at the time, at least the ones I knew. I cannot remember garlic as an ingredient, let alone a common ingredient in our food; now, I grow about 120 bulbs per year in my own garden. I remember two incidents having to do with garlic. The first happened in fifth or sixth grade. Some students in my class began calling my friend Joseph "Knobi" (short for Knoblauch, garlic). I was not really

the *habitus* (without necessarily having the practical mastery that underlies these realizations or the adequate theory of this mastery). And there is every reason to think that as soon as he reflects on his practice, adopting a quasi-theoretical posture, the agent loses any chance of expressing the truth of his practice, and especially the truth of the practice relation to the practice." (BOURDIEU 1990, p.91) [66]

I also found the text to portray a very simplistic view of the nature of science. For example, the statement "His conclusions are convincing because they logically mesh with the data" (RATNER, p.126) marks the conclusions of one author (GOLDHAGEN) over those of others that are less convincing because "inconsistent with at least some of the data" (p.126). These statements make it appear as if "data" could exist outside of paradigmatic contexts. However, we know since KUHN's (1970) seminal work showing that competing paradigms cannot even agree on what is appropriate data and what is not. Specifying what is acceptable data means, consistent with the activity theoretic approach to cultural psychology, specifying the entire activity system within which something is taken as data. Thus, other explanations might be different because they are framed within a different paradigm that does not accept

aware of this name calling until it became known that Joseph's mother had come to school and complained, which led to reprimands of the students who had called Joseph the names. [36]

The second happened one night when we traveled on the train—perhaps it was after our car broke down coming back from Yugoslavia. At one point, there was also a man of clearly Mediterranean origin. After he left the compartment on the next day, we were talking about the decidedly different smell exuded by the person, a smell that we related to garlic-eating patterns. We children experienced the smell as unusual, strange, and almost repulsive—much as my whole body revolts when I smell different meats cooking on a grill. [37]

It would have been interesting to see such developments theorized in terms of activity theory in *Cultural Psychology*. How do distinct preferences for tastes and smells develop in children, and how do these preferences become markers for cultural difference and, in the extreme, racism? [38]

3.2.3 *Cleanliness, orderliness*

Cleanliness (streets, houses, etc.) was another marker of difference, which we learned while traveling through France or into Italy. The houses seemed to change suddenly when we crossed the

as data what GOLDHAGEN and RATNER accept. [67]

Again, all the insistence (using intensifying adjectives) gives rise to a sense that the data and interpretation cannot stand on their own but need to be bolstered by statements about the genius and quality of the researcher. In fact, this, too, seems to go against the claims about cultural psychology as an objective science, which, by its very definition, is about truth independent of the quality of the researcher. If the data, descriptions, and explanations could stand on their own, we would not need the continuous reiteration of the researcher qualities to bolster the credibility of the claims. In fact, the opposite is likely to happen: Readers become suspicious of the claims, which apparently cannot stand on their own. [68]

There are other inconsistencies as well. For example, "only sophisticated [!] social scientists grasp the historical, cultural character of mundane acts" (p.136) and it takes "skillful, probing analysis because people are ordinarily not aware of them" (p.135). The text insists that there is a social-psychological reality that is independent of the researcher and "... that the researcher must comprehend this reality objectively" (p.134). At the same time, attacks on various social researchers are constructed by making

borders, which themselves required customs offices and fences to mark the difference in an otherwise unmarked topology of the landscape. We learned that the French, Italians, and all Mediterranean people more generally were not as clean as we were. Not that we could see it "naturally"; we were tutored to see the cleanliness of our own villages (where the people were using brooms to clean the sidewalks every Saturday), and the "dirtiness" and "filthiness" (Schmutz) that characterized the streets and outsides of homes in other countries. [39]

3.2.4 *Color, ethnicity*

Although my grandfather rejected the Nazi atrocities when he found out about them, although he was a world traveler, he still rejected the idea that his granddaughter, perhaps German women in general, would date and marry people of a different nationality or ethnicity. My sister was going out with a Liberian, but never visited my grandparents, though they were relative Libertarians, because she was afraid of having to face their disapproval. Although my grandparents were world travelers and for a period of time after their retirement spent as much time abroad as at home, they could not accept that their granddaughter would date an African, or for that matter, an Italian, as she did later. [40]

statements that they become "mired" in a "reiteration compulsion" (p.128) by rephrasing the way in which participants described their social reality. That is, researchers are critiqued because they attempt to make available the social reality as objectively experienced by the participants. To mediate that (discourse analysis uses the concept of "mediational device" [MULKAY & GILBERT 1984]), the text constructs in my reading the possibility that people are blinded to social reality by their social concepts (RATNER, p.137). It is difficult for me to understand how people both experience social reality in an objective way at the same time that they are blind to it. More so, the text lashes out at other researchers as well, namely those who use abstract coding—these are said to "obscure" the thoughts of the participants (p.176). [69]

The text makes claims that seem to be inconsistent. On the one hand, the text contains statements such as "Labeling an individual or a group as ... when he or she is not has terrible practical consequences" (p.179). But then I wondered about the way other researchers (BRUNER, GEE, KVALE, VALSINER) are constructed in the text (e.g., "Kvale and postmodernists are dead wrong [sic!]" [p.135]), or those researchers who, while doing their analyses, engage in "superficial,

But racism is not something isolated to Germans. The U.S. American society, for example, is fundamentally racist, forcing individuals of all ethnic backgrounds to get drowned in the "melting pot" of Anglo-Saxon middle-class culture or be rejected. In the sixties, I heard for the first time about African Americans not being allowed in the same parts of public transportations; I did not understand because those African Americans (they used to call them "Neger" [negro] back then, a piece of evidence that culture, language, and values constantly change) that I had seen in Germany, did not seem any different in humanity than the other American soldiers. [41]

When I lived in Mississippi during the eighties, evidence of racism abounded. A man leaving the house when his wife, children, or grand children watched one show or another in which an African American featured. My room mate, an African American teacher from New Orleans, talked about attempting to enter a pub, being initially asked for one piece of ID, then another, then a third, and not being able to enter because he did not have a piece of ID issued by the state of Mississippi. Fat Joe's flea market in the center of Lucedale, Mississippi, was openly selling Ku Klux Klan outfits, samples of which were hanging on flagpoles over the entry to the store. [42]

But one did not have to go to the "Deep South" to experience racism. During the mid-eighties in Martinsville, Indiana, members of the KKK were driving an African American out of town who had dared to open a little business.³ [43]

fragmented, impressionistic thinking" (p.181). We can find claims that interpretations may be *inaccurate* all the while "they are not intrinsically distorting the truth" (p.180). More than once did the popular saying, "he wants to have the cake and eat it too" thrust itself into my consciousness. [70]

The aspect I found most curious were the constant referrals to another book by the same author, *Cultural Psychology and Qualitative Methodology: Theoretical and Empirical Considerations* (RATNER 1997). Throughout *Cultural Psychology*, readers are referred to the book that preceded it, to specific sequences of pages and entire chapters. I was constantly asking myself whether it would have made more sense to read the earlier book and how this new book might distinguish itself from the earlier one given that there seems to be so much overlap between the two. [71]

4.3 My personal summary

Cultural Psychology was a great disappointment. I had picked this text because of my work in the area of activity theory and cultural psychology. I thought I would be able to learn. Instead, the rhetoric against other scholars on the one hand and the rather scant treatment of the methods that was to go with the activity theoretical approach, on the other, turned me off. I finished the book out of duty not because I particularly enjoyed it. At the end of my reviews, I ask myself whether I would use the book with my graduate students or

3 Whether this information is absolutely accurate is not quite clear. During a search to verify the information I received when I lived in Bloomington, Indiana, near Martinsville, I found a website that suggested that a dinner in honor of an African American would provide "chances for improving the tolerance climate in Martinsville" (<http://www.words-at-work.com/dateline.htm> [visited September 10, 2002]). This suggests that there are still issues concerning the tolerance

3.3 Diaspora and religious boundaries

I lived in northern Bavaria where Catholics inhabited most villages (though some other villages were dominated by a protestant population) and in each, a few families lived in diaspora. I always lived in diasporic situations, always other than my peers, never making the weekly Saturday trip to confession. I only found out later that the difference was relevant to some: a girl once told me during my teenage years that it was no use dating because she could never marry someone who was not a Catholic. (Both the idea that dating entailed marriage and that inter-denominational marriage was out of question are cultural.) [44]

When I was about eighteen, I asked my religion teacher who was also pastor (religion classes were compulsory in those days), how he could so fervently preach the message from Bible if, had he been born in India or Japan, he could have been a Hindu or Buddhist with the same fervor? Religion, to me, was a matter of context and not a matter of truth. It never made sense to me to have religion as a marker for borders such as "inter-denominational marriage" that could not be crossed. [45]

3.4 Multiculturalism, pluriculturalism

In Canada, we encourage (sometimes requiring legal precedent) difference all the while, through participation in shared activity, encouraging the

recommend it to others for this purpose. In the case of *Cultural Psychology*, my conclusion was a "definitely not!" [72]

5. *Sicher in Kreuzberg*

5.1 Content and structure

Sicher in Kreuzberg is the product of the author's doctoral dissertation work, submitted the Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations at the University of Warwick, England. The work was largely conducted among the Turkish-Berlin youth in one of Berlin's district, "Kreuzberg," literally, a mountain with a cross, a reference to the Biblical story—the book never exploits the possible allusion to the "cross" that these youths have to bear. Given the books origins in dissertation work, it is not surprising that it still has somewhat a dissertation feel, not in the least in the way it is structured and as it unfolds. Nevertheless, the book was so intriguing that I ended up reading it in one swoop and immediately afterward recommending it to some of my colleagues. [73]

In the introduction, the study is contextualized in terms of the "universe of the research," how rapport was developed with the research participants, and in terms of the implications and scope of the study. In Chapter 1, the notions of culture, globalism (culture as a whole) and syncretism (culture as assembly, bricolage of pieces), "glocal" identities (contraction of the dialectical *global* and *local* tendencies that

of African Americans that the community is working on. However, at least one website suggests that the KKK stories about "Martinsville as KKK headquarters" are "bunk" (see <http://scican.net/MAPH/MAPHch13.html> [visited Sept. 10, 2002; Broken link, FQS, December 2004]). The website of tolerance.org no longer lists a hate group of any kind in the community of Martinsville.

commonality of all citizens. For example, police officers of Sikh origin may now wear the traditional turban rather than the hats that officers have worn for decades, since the country was born. [46]

Teaching here on the Canadian West Coast requires particular sensitivities to the plurality of patterns on which individuals may draw in their bricolage of identity. Aboriginal students often do not speak when there is insufficient temporal "space" between speakers so that in classes, where aboriginal students are present, only sensitivity to the temporal lag between speakers will permit them with points of entry in conversations. In other aspects, these aboriginal students are like those of other individuals born in the country, for example, in their easy adoption of the practice of addressing their professors by using first names. Students from Asian countries and recent immigrants, on the other hand, find this practice disturbing as it takes major cultural markers of respect (ROTH & HARAMA 2000). Some students never change to the first name pattern others resort to addressing me with title and first name, as "Dr. Michael." Here, we have a hybrid form that emerges in daily practices that pays tribute both to the old forms of interactions (title) as well as the new forms (first name). [47]

Perhaps multiculturalism may lead to the abandonment of the concept of culture, especially if, as KAYA's text suggests, culture such as Turkish-Berlin hip-hop emerges from a bricolage of elements. At this point in time, opposite trends can be observed. There are clearly nationalist

characterize modern society) are introduced and articulated. The text also debates subcultural theory and the concept of ethnic minority for marking difference. [74]

In the second chapter, diaspora is introduced as a theoretical tool in the toolbox of the cultural sociologist (anthropologist) to articulate the experiences of second and third-generation immigrants and contrasted with the political strategies of their parents, which are captured in the notions of "migrant" (intention of going back) and "minority" (emphasis on binary relation with majority) strategy. This chapter also provides a historical review of the contexts within which Turks had initially come to Germany, namely as *Gastarbeiter* (literally guest workers, foreigners working in the country without landed immigrant or citizen status). [75]

Chapter 3 then provides a detailed description of the particular context of *Kreuzberg 36*, a district of the municipality, which has become known as "Kleines [Little] Istanbul." Readers find there descriptions of the major Turkish ethnic associations and of the ways in which multiculturalism has been institutionalized in the city of Berlin. The situation of the Alevi, Turks with a "heterodox religious identity" (KAYA, p.111) largely originating in Anatolia, is used as a way of rendering concrete the cultural concept and processes of "othering the other." [76]

In the following chapter, the discursive construction of the "home" for diasporic individuals, which is here and not-here at the same time (they are treated as

tendencies, such as the Basque or Corsicans, or the tendencies to self-government among aboriginal peoples (Australia, Canada); the definition of the unit is a definition of a distinct Self for each and everyone subscribing to the tendency. On the other hand, there are also the opposite tendencies, which lead to an increasing creolization of ethnicities. In this case, the question of identity and its correspondent construct of culture needs to be reexamined, especially when multicultural means no distinct culture along traditional lines of difference. [48]

3.5 Person, identity, and lived experience

Over the years, I have found it increasingly difficult to say who "I" am; certainly not voluntarily do I talk about German ancestry but more as having grown up in Germany. I do not understand myself as German but as Canadian, with all the sensibilities that are attributed to this multicultural, multiethnic nation. Increasingly I have become aware of the fact that we define who we are in terms of narratives of past events, the roles we have played in our lives, the successes and failures, in terms of the activities that we engage in, our occupation, marital status, number of children, or the music we listen to. [49]

In both books, it was difficult to discern what it means to be a human being, making decisions in the specific context that are described. Identity is a structural aspect, which, in *Cultural Psychology* is expressed in the treatment of German soldiers as cultural dopes that have become (or rather were) killing

Gastarbeiter by German citizens and as *Almanci* or *Almanyali* (Turkish for "German-like"; stereotypical definition of German-Turks in Turkey [p.215]) in Turkey. In the interviews conducted, the Berlin-Turkish youths described Kreuzberg as a place where they feel safe and sound (the German word "sicher" also means "sure"), a place where they are at home and where many German visitors only come through by tourist bus, caged for safety as if traveling through the wilderness (readers will certainly think of the cages used for watching sharks in the wild or of the 4x4 vehicles full of tourists in African parks). There is also an articulation of the strategies of identity constructions among middle-class Turkish youths (who live in different parts of the city), which serves as a contrast to the identity construction of the working-class youth at the core of *Sicher in Kreuzberg* developed in the subsequent two and final chapters. [77]

Chapter 5 articulates the cultural sources of identity formation processes among Turkish working-class youth, including the orientation to Turkey, religion and ethnicity, and to the reception they receive in Turkey. In this chapter, descriptions of the leisure and hip-hop youth cultures are developed, including those of three major forms of expression: graffiti, dance, and "cool" style. The chapter concludes with a discussion and concretization of the concept of cultural bricolage in the hip-hop youth style. The sixth and final chapter then moves to articulate rappers as minstrels and storytellers, who both express and promote a process of developing consciousness

machines. *Sicher in Kreuzberg* also articulates the structural or shall I say, constructed aspects of identities:

"We can construct our identities only if we are able to experience others' reactions to our attitudes and behaviour. Unless we are defined by others, we cannot represent ourselves." (KAYA, p.41) [50]

But such approaches miss an important aspect of human existence: the daily, personal experience of life, the experience of being in the world, being affected (there is no proper equivalent to the German "Betroffenheit"), and living, lived testimony ("Zeugnis" [MÜLLER 1972, p.389]). These experiences are the polar opposite to structure (MÜLLER 1972), constructed nature of identity, because, in the limit, they are the unreduced experience, the open encounter with the social and material world that is thicker than "thick description," the biographical experience of being affected. Who is the person, who equally likes medieval plainchant, requiems, MAHLER's symphonies, serialist compositions, and minimalist music? I do not experience a contradiction between *high* culture and *popular* or *counter* culture or subculture—though being raised in Germany and going to *Gymnasium* meant that initially I had the same disdain for *popular* culture as most of my fellow students. But over time, especially after I learned to appreciate classical music in my early twenties, developed a wide-range of musical tastes. These include the rock of my teenage years (Rolling Stones, Jimmy HENDRIX, Doors), (Texas) blues that I came to know and appreciate during my years in

for the situation in a counter-hegemonic fashion, and therefore enact class politics and with it, are and become "organic intellectuals" (GRAMSCI 1971). [78]

5.2 Points of convergence and only minor hesitations

Throughout the process of reading, re-reading, and commenting upon the *Sicher in Kreuzberg*, I thoroughly enjoyed it. The book passed the "would you recommend it to graduate students or colleagues" with a "strongly agree." I had only some minor qualms and irritations. [79]

Although I had seen graffiti before, I had never thought about it in either positive or negative terms. But while reading the book, it occurred to me that making graffiti is an expression of the most fundamental of human qualities—agency. In an age where schools around the world still discipline the students' bodies to make them compliant subjects for working in FORDdian factories, graffiti is a practice of counter-hegemony. In painting walls, the graffiti artist actively changes the environment that he or she inhabits, the spaces that we all inhabit. They create a counter-hegemonic space where they "wage a war against the power of the state" (KAYA, p.167). Graffiti is a form of the active production of culture, which is diametrically opposed to the ordinary channeled form of artistic expression that most frequently does not touch public spaces. [80]

Increasing connections across formerly distant territories, physically or via the

Mississippi, a broad range of classical music from plainchant through the entire gamut of twentieth-century music. It seems to be much easier to pinpoint someone in terms of cultural psychology and cultural identity who is listening almost exclusively to BEETHOVEN and DVORAK, which seem to be consistent with his (self-declared and observable) conservatism on other matters. [51]

Who is the person who equally enjoys reading DERRIDA (1998) on monolingualism, KAYA (2001) on hip-hop culture, or a sociohistorical analysis of the proof of FERMAT's last theorem (MACKENZIE 1999)? Who is the person who is research professor, grows all of his vegetables year-round, and spends an hour and a half each day on a road-racing bicycle? How would it change my (reader's) own experience if I could be him (author) for just a day? [52]

For me the most troublesome aspect in much of social research, one that neither modern nor postmodern scholarship has sufficiently addressed is lived unrepresented experience itself. The simple fact of being in the world, HEIDEGGER's (1977) central concern in *Sein und Zeit* [Being and time], doing what one has to do, saying what one has to say, without being reflective about it or trying to do and say more than one does and say. [53]

In my present life, there are many moments of complete abandonment to the present moment, in writing research, tending to my garden, riding a racing bicycle, teaching, or cooking meals. Take the present moment of

electronic media, allows us to have experiences with many different forms of life. This multitude of experiences become referents for our acts, but because of the different ethnic, religious, or linguistic origins of these experiences, identities and culture are assembled through a continuous bricolage of elements. An important aspect of life in countries such as Germany, United States, or Canada today is the level of connectedness into global communication networks. Any international newscast shows images from many countries and cultures in a single broadcast (the West Bank of the Jordan, Israel, Afghanistan, and Pakistan being the popular ones at the time of this writing). Even more so, the music television shows blend images in ever faster-changing sequences: "MTV presents the most fragmented set of images from the multicultural mix of musics, fashions, ethnic traditions, and human races" (IHDE 1995, p.155). These news and music offerings have to be understood as "pluricultural *bricolages*" (ibid.). [81]

Cultural bricolage, or creolization, leads to the transgression of traditionally defined cultures along the lines of nation states, leading to the emergence of a new "third space" or "third culture" (KAYA, p.173). Creolization leads to the emergence of new, transnational identities and syncretic cultures. Identity and culture no longer develop along fixed trajectories but in dynamic, interactional, and complex patterns. This development is never complete, as I argued elsewhere about professional development of teachers: being in the classroom is always also a

writing these lines. I might say, "I" am sitting, working on an article. In fact, saying "I" is overstating a central aspect of the experience. Nor does it appear appropriate to say "sitting" and "working." It is only after the fact that I (can) say things like, "I have been writing" or "I just spent working without noticing that three hours had gone by." Both books are silent about the personal side of culture and identity, experiences we have while absorbed in activity, and how these experiences are culturally (if so) mediated. Many years ago, I wrote the following lines that were part of a poem in a collection entitled "Transcendence."

Where there are no words
Space and time dissolved
Being is
The experience of unity
Being able to abandon Self [54]

The experience is reflected in the story of HYAKUJO, when asked what was the most wonderful thing, replied "Alone sit Daiyu Mount" (SUZUKI 1960). There is no reference to anything or anyone sitting; the sitter is not discriminated from the mountain. [55]

Can we still talk about cultural identity when the very tools and processes for "constructing" identities, representation and reflection, do no longer exist in the experience? How can cultural studies, which focus so much on the "construction" of identities, and cultural psychology, which focuses on the production of identity in activity, account for such experiences? I take it with VARELA (1996), theories that cannot explain personal experience are not good. [56]

moment of becoming in the classroom (ROTH 2002). [82]

Another interesting observation, which unfortunately was not contextualized in terms of the literature of the politics of artifacts concerns practices to counteract graffiti and posting of notices. The municipality of Kreuzberg had the pillars of a bridge restyled in such a way that it was no longer possible to stick posters to them. KAYA notes, "In doing so, the Municipality aims to ban the announcement of those political messages" (p.93). Recent scholarship has repeatedly pointed out the politics of artifacts, tools, and architecture (e.g., FOUCAULT 1975). Thus, at a particular period and under the aegis of a certain engineer, the underpasses between New York City and the beaches were built so low that the city buses could not travel these routes, in effect excluding the low-income population, which relied on public transportation, from accessing the latter (WINNER 1980). [83]

But the situation in Berlin perhaps also shows us that our analytic schemes need to be refined. It is not just that the municipality engages in a political act that makes it impossible for notices to be "published" on the bridge pillars. The actions of the politicians can themselves be understood as a form of counter-counter-hegemony against the rhetoric of the graffiti and posters seemingly appearing everywhere in their town. [84]

One qualm pertains to the data. As a qualitative researcher, I do understand that using audio- or videotapes can change the relationship that one is

trying to establish with the research participants. I somewhat bought into the argument that these youths had been the participants to professional broadcasts before and that using these recording devices might have encouraged them to construct their identities in the same fashion, and building on this history. On the one hand, I have the experience that the very use of recording devices can be introduced as part of becoming familiar with the context so that, at some point, they are no longer viewed as special instruments or to construct me in a different way. On the other hand, such recordings would not only have allowed the researcher to substantiate some of the materials with concrete transcriptions, which often lend somewhat more credibility to what participants have said than the after the fact notes that the researcher necessarily has to construct. In addition, such recordings would have allowed a much more thoroughgoing analysis of the linguistic practices that characterize the culture than has been done at present (Chapter 4, pp.147-151). This analysis has left me wanting for more, and is but one example of where I felt that a little more data would have allowed more elaboration. In a sense, I find the book too short and wanted to have a little more in terms of data and analysis, all the while feeling that the theoretical apparatus has been well developed and presented. [85]

I also thought that there should have been more, other, complementary data. For example, I really wanted a map of the area described (which I got by going to <http://www.mapquest.com>)

and I really wanted to have some photographs of phenomena, such as the pillars that prevent posters getting stuck to it, or other relevant features that characterize this neighborhood. In this context, I found it unfortunate that the two pictures that actually did exist in the book appeared at the very end of the book, almost outside of it, after references and appendices. I would have appreciated a better integration into the text and some more detailed semiotic readings of the kind of work that these graffiti do in the streets—as forms of counter-hegemony. Finally, I noted that adjectives were used to rhetorically construct statements in particular ways ("Clifford (1988: 5) *rightly* stated ..." [p.165], "Melucci (1989: 14) has *correctly* stated ..." [p.175], or "He *rightly* claims that ..." [p.189]). Such phrasing would be eliminated by many editors of journals that adhere to the guidelines of the American Psychological Association, a culture that has shaped my own reading and writing practices. [86]

There were some minor contradictions, either in the book or between statements in the book and my own experience. For example, I don't know what to make of contradictory statements: "For instance, while their German 'mates' meet in each other's house to converse or to entertain, the Turkish youths prefer meeting in the street" (p.140); "The working-class Turkish youngsters mostly 'hang out' together and entertain themselves in the group meetings taking place in one of the youngsters' house" (p.163). At another place, a claim is made that at certain stages, the Turkish immigrants were relatively well educated, the

popular perception in the villages and cities where I grew up was that the *Gastarbeiter* were relatively uneducated, and that they made little effort in speaking or learning our language. Finally, there is the claim that "Turkish workers ... were not visible in the public space" (p.13). Traveling a lot by train in those days, I know that train stations were meeting places for *Gastarbeiter* of all nations. Separated by country of origin, they all seem to congregate lacking other meeting places in the main halls of the stations where they were protected from the weather. Thus, for those traveling by train, *Gastarbeiter* of all nations were visible in public space. [87]

The text suggests that "multiculturalism assumes that cultures are internally consistent, unified and structured wholes, belonging to ethnic groups" (p.121). There is the rather broad statement that "the ideology of multiculturalism has done nothing but excluding and imprisoned ethnic minorities in their own isolated cultural islands" (p.121). The sentence does not have a qualifier pertaining to the context, so that it can be read as a general claim about multiculturalism. Whereas I am not a specialist on multiculturalism, the trends of increasing multiethnicity in Vancouver seems to show that multiculturalism, to which Canada adheres, and which it encourages in its immigration policies, may have a different consequence, namely that of ethnic mixing. [88]

In cultural historical activity theory, the entities that make a system are not conceived as independent but aspects of mediated relations. Consequently, an individual, a tool, or a community cannot be theorized in an independent manner but must be understood in

terms of the historically changing, mediated relations in which they are integral and constitutive parts. Based on a case study in an inner-city school largely attended by African American students living in poverty, it was shown how, by participating in the activity system of schooling, the identities of students and teachers are continuously made and remade (ROTH et al., in press). A teacher changed from being "someone not being able to control the class" to being respected and successful school staff; a student changed from being street fighters to being an A student. As a result of the study, we argued that identity should not be thought of as a stable characteristic of individuals but as a contingent achievement of situated activity. This resonates the statement that "cultural identity is rather acquired and renewed in a continuous dialogue between self and external world" (KAYA, p.162). [89]

However, despite agreeing I take this statement *cum grano salis*⁴, particularly with respect to the ideas of identity as being acquired and the distinction between internal and external world. If it is the case that identity is (in part) influenced by the setting, and in particular the salient objects in the setting, then the distinction between inner and outer is not very clear. If cognition is distributed across the setting (LAVE 1988), then so is cognition of Self and identity. If the aspects that contribute to and mediate the construction of Self are spread around the context, who we are must also be spread around the context. The hesitations that I have with respect to the notion of "acquisition" pertains to

4 Using Latin expressions is a cultural practice, accepted in German academic circles but rejected and even despised in Anglo-Saxon scholarly communities. My using them is an aspect of the hybrid identity that is co-constitutive of an autobiography involving different cultural contexts.

the fact that the word can be read and interpreted in a material sense, as if something is incorporated and remaining with the individual. If, on the other hand, identity is continuously made and remade, whether or not something is lastingly acquired, or shapes us in a lasting way has to be an empirical rather than an a priori, ontological matter.

"Before the reunification, the West German tourists often used to visit Kreuzberg just to have a quick look without getting off the tourist bus. They were afraid of us. It was as if they were visiting a zoo, and the bus was like their cage protecting them from the dangerous animals."
(pp.140-141) [90]

Situations such as that ask for a much more differentiated approach when seen in the context of other situations that bear some similarity but also differences. Visitors to Western Canada and even locals go to China towns of Vancouver and Victoria, though they do not feel that they have to do so in a bus only, though a quick visitor might do without getting out of the bus. Victoria is a popular tourist destination, many coming for a one-day trip by buss from Seattle or Vancouver. Having the air of a quaint colonial (Victorian) town, it has to be subject to a symmetric analysis, which would give rise to a result that all tourist destinations can be interpreted like zoos, or if the analogy breaks down, another more concept more appropriate has to be developed. [91]

5.3 My personal summary

I read this book at a moment that an ailing health prevented me engages in most activities that a scholar normally

engaged in—I did not even have sufficient energy to pursue most normal everyday activities. Yet this book was so fascinating that I read it in its entirety one afternoon while trying to recover by spending time at the beach on the Pacific Ocean not far from my home. The book had come at the right time: it was as refreshing as the cool breeze coming of the ocean was to my embodied mind and minded body. [92]

6. Coda

Time has come to change our ideas about culture and identity. The concept of culture is based on experiences of rootedness, stasis, and fixity that were associated with the activity systems of yesteryear, animal husbandry and agriculture. Now, in an age where electronic technologies give us new experiences of relating to others, where former experiences of proximity are expanded to include anyone connected to the Internet, there is a need to look at culture in a new way. The new concept has to be capable of operating against the inner character of culture to account for the syncretic nature of the new cultural identities. The "multi-" in multicultural must expand so much that the fragments are better understood as pieces serving the bricolage—all culture will be cultural bricolage.

"The construction of diasporic cultural identity derives from cultures and histories in negotiation, collision and dialogue. Diasporic identity is a disaggregated identity, and it disrupts the very categories of identity because it is not national, not genealogical, not religious, but all of these in dialectical tensions with one another." (KAYA, p.80) [93]

In this active exchange with the two books, I have been working myself toward a conception of identity that lives with and through rather than despite difference. Identity is a constant production and reproduction of Selves, through transformation and difference. But there are other aspects that of experience that require a different conception than the process of "construction." Much work remains to be done. [94]

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