CHAPTER 6

SOCIAL ORDER: STRUCTURAL AND STRUCTURATIONAL SOCIOLOGY

The social field on which individuals take action to satisfy needs and desires is created by humans in the relations they form, interactions they enter into, and organizational arrangements they construct or accede to. Further, those human arrangements transform the perceived material field for action through the cultural meaning, attention, and value assigned to the material environment and the work which transforms the material into a built environment of resources and possibilities. To understand how individuals act and interact (and thus how they use spoken and written language), we therefore need to pay attention to human-made social and material orders. These are not orders hypothesized by social theorists as abstractions, but are rather emergent historical orders, recognized and engaged in by participants.

To be more explicit, built material orders exist because people build them and social orders exist because people act in certain ways with respect to each other. Those built orders and ways of behavior and interactions are dependent on the ways people understand and orient toward the world. Those understandings are based on the individual's life experience and observations, the visible signs provided by others, human-made artifacts embodying social practices and beliefs, and the words used to describe, discuss, evaluate, and regulate the social and material words. Human beings in trying to make sense of their worlds so they can act, in using their propensities for individual thought and socially shared thought and social interaction, perceive order in the social world, and by perceiving that order help produce and reproduce that order, for those orders are constructed of social facts. As W. I. Thomas (1923) stated, drawing on G. H. Mead, what people believe to be real is real in its consequences. Social analysis, however, can make social orders more salient and reflective to participants, influencing how participants act (a process Giddens (1987) calls the double hermeneutic and Merton (1948) calls reflexivity).

MERTON'S SOCIAL STRUCTURE THROUGH INDIVIDUAL CHOICE-MAKING

The sociology of Robert Merton will be our starting point on this survey of accounts of social order because his sociology finds social order in the

process by which individuals make choices among alternatives they perceive as socially structured (see Stinchcombe, 1975, for a perceptive analysis of Merton's core themes). That is, the social facts people perceive provide the field upon which they conceive, shape, and choose actions. In so acting they advance their own perception of the socially structured world, reinforcing that vision within the externalized world for others to interpret and respond to. The self-fulfilling prophecy (a phrase coined by Merton) exemplifies this theme starkly (1948).

The relevance of this approach to social order for rhetoric is clear. Rhetorical action creates representations of the social world so to influence the audience's perceptions and consequent actions. Productive rhetoric directly takes this position for the shaping of new discourse while critical rhetoric attempts to recover the position and assumptions of those criticized to uncover their intents, choices, meanings, and actions. The rhetor's perception of relevant genres and their appropriateness to the situation provides structured sets of alternative choices for action, and then the genre choice structures further choices to be made. In making utterances, in essence, rhetors project social orders. In their speech rhetors make visible how they see the world (or at least would like to have others see the world) and attempt to enlist others into that worldview by seeking coordinated responses.

Mertonian sociology is particularly relevant for literate rhetoric. Situation and the related concept of *kairos* are fundamental to rhetorical analysis, but the perception of situation is particularly problematic for literate communication. Writing and reading enact social situations that are usually not visibly present and offer few immediate, visceral prompts to direct response. Rather, they must rely on their social typifications, including genre, in order to understand, make choices, and act. Thus the situation both in its specific circumstances and its embedding within larger social orders is dependent on the writer's and reader's typified construction of the situation and relevant social arrangements encapsulated in the perception of genre. The literate rhetor constantly recalls and uses social facts to maintain a sense of the situation.

Merton provides an appropriate starting point of our consideration of social order in relation to rhetoric for a further reason, for he integrates the orientation of the individual to a complex picture of social organization. The writer's orientation toward the social group he or she is writing toward is the basis of the writer's stance and the individual specificity of the communication being written. The account I have provided of active, social, communicative selves has drawn on three major traditions that have had great force in shaping sociology: the Marxist, the phenomenological, and the pragmatist. In working with these various traditions Merton invented a precursor to structurationist

sociology which offers an integration of phenomenological micro-sociological investigations with larger structural accounts of the perceived and reproducing and evolving organization of society (1968b). But to structurationism he adds a particular lesson from Durkheim, in that large social appearances/data can serve as indicators of psychological orientations (1968b, and personal communication). This allows him to harness observation and quantification of large social phenomena to a kind of social psychology, considering how individuals orient towards collectivities and to comment on the larger organizing structures that shape our modern world of action and relations, though with constant awareness of the difficulty of indicators and of differential position, perception, and interpretation (Merton et al., 1979). This complex view allows us to see the individual writer and the writer's intentions within larger conflicted dynamics of social organizations. However, in order to better present this complex social picture, the middle of this chapter will focus on social theory with only a few passing mentions of writing; the last section of the chapter will discuss more explicitly the relevance of this theory to writing.

THE MECHANISMS OF CHOICE MAKING WITHIN OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES

Merton developed his view of social structure through a long career of theoretical, historical, and empirical investigations from two vantage points—considering the patterns and mechanisms of perceptions, self-positioning, and choice making of individual agents, and considering the larger enduring historically emergent group structures, which actors perceive as providing the fields and opportunities for action and which influence constraints and outcomes. The first consideration bears some similarity to what we now consider micro-sociology, the detailed observation of individual action in local circumstances, but Merton considers that local actions are conditioned, shaped, and oriented towards larger organizations of society. The second bears some similarity to what we now call macro-sociology, which considers the larger structures of society as ordering lives from the top down, but Merton viewed these structures as emergent by choice making, by the ways people have oriented to the situations as structured and the institutions they have created from those orientations. Thus Merton's work identifies a meso-sociology, a middle range of mechanisms by which the micro occurs with respect to macro and the macro emerges from and is realized in the micro.

Merton, in a widely cited chapter, calls for theory of the middle range (1968b). By this he means theory

> to guide empirical inquiry . . . intermediate to general theories of social systems which are too remote from particular classes of social behavior, organization, and change to account for what is observed and to those detailed orderly descriptions of particulars that are not generalized at all. . . . Middle range theories deal with delimited aspects of social phenomena. One speaks of a theory of reference groups, of social mobility, or role-conflict, and of the formation of social norms just as one speaks of a theory of prices, a germ theory of disease, or a kinetic theory of gases. (Merton, 1968b, pp. 39-40)

These theories of the middle range are potentially compatible with a number of different systems of macro thought, in that they specify concrete mechanisms by which events unfold, but do not necessarily dictate the largest scale picture that can be drawn of society.

This methodological focus on theories that can be grounded in observable phenomena and can be generalized, points toward the kind of concepts that would be researchable and reliably warrantable, and perhaps practically useful. They are theories concerning the mechanisms that link individual local behavior with apparent large patterned organization. Theories of the middle range point toward the mechanisms of the middle range. They are mechanisms in the sense that they show how things regularly happen, organized in patterned ways. As such these mechanisms provide anticipatable pathways for participant orientation, perception, and choice-making. If one has the concepts right, identifying how events, interactions, and relations become organized, one can see them operative in various circumstances, identify choices that can influence events, and anticipate how some events would be likely to unfold. Reflective knowledge of orderliness helps one make choices with a greater power.

TERMS FOR AN AGENTIVE STRUCTURAL SOCIOLOGY

In elucidating the social field from the point of view of the individual agent needing to make choices, Merton has developed the following key concepts, some drawing on existing sociological work and some his novel invention.

- reference group—the choice of social fields one orients to for value, affiliation, identity, life trajectory (1950a)
- norms and values—the perceived set of behaviors and commitments that are part of affiliation with and participation in reference groups and in

the performance of roles. These are both what one perceives as part of the fulfillment of that form of life and what one perceives one will be held accountable to in various interactions (1938a, 1973)
- role and role set—specific forms of interaction and interpersonal obligation one enters into as part of one's social positioning (1957b)
- role conflict and ambivalence—the difficulties one enters into because of the multiple roles and relationships as well as multiple statuses and reference groups and incoherence within the values, norms, and perceived behavioral possibilities (1963, 1976)
- conflict mediation and resolution—as emergent phenomenon, leading to further chosen patterning as favored patterned solutions emerge.
- opportunity structure—the perceived patterned affordances of various status's roles within reference groups as well as obligatory relationship and structures for the fulfillment of needs, desires, enactment of behaviors and goals (1959).
- anomie—the disaffiliation from reference groups that one still remains bound to, the patterned unconventional choices one may make to negotiate the incoherences of values and behavioral opportunities (1938b, 1949a)
- recruitment and socialization—the mechanisms by which individuals are attracted to reference groups and come to learn and behaviorally integrate into the roles, norms, values of a social group.

At a second level he has had a strong interest in the historically emerged patterned structures and institutions which provide the opportunity structures for the affiliation and development of individuals and which provide for the larger social organization of life and the carrying out of social activities and the meeting of needs of society and the individual. At this level key concepts are such things as

- institutions and bureaucracies
- professions and science as socially organized activities
- value and norm systems associated with professions, bureaucracies, sciences, other regularized systems (1938a, 1973)
- patterned behavior and character-behavioral types within institutional or professional space (1940).
- forms of socialization and training that produce professionals of particular dispositions, orientations, and perceptions (1957b)
- differential positioning of individuals within system and with respect to specific needs, perceptions, and opportunities for individual action (1940, 1945, 1950b)
- socially organized patterns of evaluation and advancement (1968a, 1971, 1995)

- socially organized events having a tendency or trajectory to particular outcomes (1957a, 1961)
- functions and dysfunctions, manifest and latent (1968b)
- unanticipated consequences as emergent social order or disorder (1936, 1989).

His account of forms of organization as historically emergent from individual choice making over long periods of time has gone hand in hand with his historical studies, beginning with his first book about the relationship between the rise of modern science as a form of patterned activity within the social beliefs, norms, values and patterned economic and political activity of Renaissance and Restoration England (1938a). Considered the founder of the sociology of science, his studies of science have regularly had a deep historical character, all directed toward understanding what has made science a particular field of endeavor that evokes behaviors different than those of other forms of social life, while accomplishing work upon which many domains of modern society have come to rely (1965, 1973). He asked similar questions of other modern professions, especially in the health area (Merton et al., 1957) and bureaucracy (1940, 1945)

MERTON'S RELATION TO STRUCTURATIONIST ACCOUNTS

Merton's view of structure as constantly produced and reproduced through the actions of agents, through their individual perceptions shaped by prior experience, affiliations and choices, is consistent with later structurationist (see Giddens, 1984) and related accounts (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990), but he provides a more articulated account of the mechanisms by which individuals perceive, orient toward, and make conscious choices within their social worlds.

Structurationist accounts, on the other hand, point more directly to habituated behavior and the dispositions of socialized agents. Typified action is more a matter of habit, affective security, and compulsion than it is of understanding and conscious choice making. Typification, unless it is brought to consciousness for active choice, can be the vehicle of naturalization. Genre and other forms of typified behavior would be chosen and reproduced in most cases automatically, as one would move toward those repeated behaviors that one was most familiar with and one felt most secure within. Giddens, drawing on the interpersonal psychiatrists Erikson and Sullivan, particularly associates repeated forms of social behavior with habits developed within early senses of the secure world, reproducing and extending those secure senses of the world—what he

calls ontological security (Giddens, 1984, p.125) and holding at bay the more anxiety-provoking circumstances of the unknown or threatening possibilities of the world (Giddens, 1984, 51 ff). Thus habit is motivatedly reinforced by the anxiety system, and typification is not only a strategic ordering of the world but an affective dynamic that maintains social order through repeated action. More reflexive and intentional strategic orientation toward life is built only on a sense of security that allows one to consider one's circumstances more broadly, so as to restructure one's relations and actions.

Bourdieu has a similar account of deeply seated habitual judgments and actions, bred through early experience. He calls the sum of these habits the habitus or "durable, transposible dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72; 1990, p. 53). Bourdieu's views are unclear on the ways in which one's repertoire of perception, judgment, and behavior might be extended either through later sets of experiences within new circumstances or through reflection. Bourdieu at times states that reflective observation of one's habitus may permit some degree of freedom from simply habitual reproduction. At other times he allows for complex and multiple sources of habitus, stemming from many periods in one's life as one enters into new cultural and social fields, introducing variety and change, though not necessarily reflexive choice (Calhoun, 2006).

While reflection on action and reflective action are important categories for Giddens, Bourdieu, and Merton, only Merton provides an extended exposition of the way reflective action is structured. The others consider structured action as pre-reflective, which reflection frees one from. In contrast, Merton's residual category of those things not reflected upon consists of those things unanticipated. Insofar as these unanticipated consequences have functional consequences for the reorganization of social relations they can be seen as the agents of social structural change and the precursors of latent functions, systemically part of the dynamics of social relations but not anticipated or by design, will, or approval of the participants. Most of Merton's social reasoning, nonetheless, respects the perception, planning, choice-making, reflective understanding of circumstances, and reasoned adjustment to situations of participants acting in a world of social facts.

Thus while Giddens and Bourdieu provide deeper appreciation for the role of habit (as do Dewey, 1922, Mead, 1929, and James, 1890) in the compulsive and naturalized patternings of social behavior leading to enduring social orders, they do not provide extended accounts of the reflective choice making available as the individual's reflective perception, judgment, maturity, and emotional security develop so that they are open to more of the possibilities of the world while needing to act in that world. Merton through the idea of reference group

provides a way to deal with the multiplicity of choices and orientations a person has available in the modern world, and the way the person negotiates among them or finds conflict and ambivalence (Merton, 1976). Habits and habitus can be seen as limit cases of Mertonian social structure where the individual is severely restricted in the orders he or she can perceive and act on in the world, and thus is repetitively and forcefully drawn down repeating paths of behavior. With only a single dominant reference group one is drawn into an affectively powerful set of behaviors, perceptions, and evaluations.

Because Merton's work consistently understands the role of patterned individual perception and choice making, as well as the large perceived patterns of social field upon which one acts, he provides a way to consider how the contribution of recent microsociological work can be integrated into the longer tradition of macro and institutional sociology. Understanding that people make structured choices within fields perceived as structured gives force to such traditional sociological categories as status and roles, institutions, identifiable and structured groups, without turning people into sociological dopes, as Garfinkel (1967) phrased his accusation of macro-sociology. In a Mertonian world individuals are not simply driven to follow norms, nor are they limited to the security of early habits of relations. Rather the adoption of norms, behaviors, and evaluations is part of orienting toward, becoming part of, and participating in chosen social groups that provide perceived opportunity for the satisfaction of desires and needs, that carry out appreciated functions, and that provide a place for one. Larger social forms are not just analysts' categories that impose determinative claims; they emerge out of the practice of individuals attempting to live in a world they need to perceive order in, in order to act. They are, users' categories, in the same way Schutz turned Weber's categories inside out. The theorist and researcher only elucidate what people have made and how they relate to what they have made.

The pragmatic, phenomenological, and Marxist perspectives on human agency that we have looked at in previous chapters all point toward historically emerged social orders and structures and contemporary processes of social organization and ordering. These orders exist only in the enactment, as people orient towards them, respect them, and act as though they existed. They do not exist in some abstract realm of ideal form apart from their practical accomplishment. Certain enduring artifacts may bear markings of social orders perceived at their time of construction, such as architecture or laws, and further these artifacts may facilitate continued enactment of these orders in even more robust ways than before, as when a stadium facilitates and perhaps economically necessitates the production of sports and entertainment events, or laws and court decisions codify practice and provide new penalties for violation. Bureaucracies

usually embody not only architecture and laws, but budgets, paychecks, forms, files, organizational charts, and a myriad of other material and symbolic artifacts that are integral to the social order. Yet the moment people stop going to the office to do the work or the government loses its legitimacy, or the paychecks stop coming, all those artifacts become empty shells and the bureaucratic social order vanishes. For writing this means texts live only when they are written and read, only when they are in people's minds as part of their activities. The textual artifact at the bottom of a drawer has no social force until it is rediscovered and someone finds it significant and signifying. This is why rhetoric needs theories that tie together the individual and social structures at the point of action and choice making.

THE RELEVANCE OF MESO-PHENOMENA AND THEORIES OF THE MIDDLE RANGE FOR RHETORIC AND WRITING

Rhetoric is a reflective, agentive, choice-centered perspective on social action. Accordingly rhetoric seeks to articulate strong forms of orderliness to guide people in practice. Any theory that helps specify the social landscape, the roles and relationships authorizing and enacted in rhetorical utterances, also helps enrich our understanding of what constrains, motivates, shapes, and is realized in any socio-rhetorical action. As rhetoricians, we need some such structural theory to give us means to consider the larger forms of organization that we know skillful writers orient toward, and we can't leave it all to local interaction and general tactics. A purely local approach to rhetoric has the paradoxical effect of making rhetoric universal, treating all situations basically alike in character beyond local accidents, and offering the same repertoire of tools and understanding to serve for all circumstances. Only by developing some account of the differentiation of the life worlds that people participate in can we begin to understand how and why forms of writing differ, the dimensions along which they do differ, and the differential means of action in each. Merton's theories of the middle range help elucidate one's position on a rhetorical field and those patterns that can structure rhetorical choice. From this perspective, genres create opportunity structures for action, providing choices and directing energies for the realization of our interests.

This need for a structural theory is particularly important for a writing centered rhetoric, where the writer is typically removed from an audience in time and space, where documents may travel across situations, where print reproduction makes multiplication and dispersal even greater. Electronic technologies now further increase the multiplication and dispersal of times

and places of contact. In face-to-face rhetoric we can see, hear, and smell the situation and monitor the reactions of the people we are talking with—even in ways that lie below conscious thought. The immediacy, even without reflective tools, may carry us very far in talking appropriately and understanding; yet even under those face-to-face conditions rhetoric offers reflective advantage. In writing situations, our need for rhetoric is all the greater as we may have little immediate situational information and even less immediate visceral feel, so we need to rely on our patterned understanding of how situations go, the organization of social endeavors, the roles and relationships of participants, and the interests and norms of audiences. We need to understand the social systems and actions the texts are part of with all the complexities of affiliation and disaffiliation, conflicting reference groups, multiple sets of norms and attitudes. An understanding of how bureaucracies, epistemic communities work, or institutions and organizations work helps us understand how texts work to carry out the relations and activities with these social configurations.

Further, we gain a deeper understanding of our writing choices if we understand how texts produce and reproduce particular structures through genres' participation in activity system, making some patterns more salient or more dubious, or affect the perceptions of future readers about the social field. Each of our rhetorical acts goes beyond the immediate message it delivers within an ordered social world to continue and modify that order. That continuous enactment or modification of the social order may be indeed as an important consequence of our rhetorical work accomplished by our reading and writing as any specifics of the particular message.

For example, consider the ways our reading and writing in particular genres enlist us in certain identities, roles and relationships (Bazerman, 2000b; Smith & Schryer, 2008). In filling out a government form we become a client of a social service agency. The writers of the form themselves take on the voice of the institutional inquirer, with legitimized power. If the responder does not comply there will be organized consequences. If the responder does accept the assigned role, he or she then must reveal personal information, and become an acquiescent supplicant dependent on the rules and procedures of the bureaucratic order. The bureaucratic reader of this document produced by an asymmetrical collaboration is in an evaluative role. The reader further becomes institutionally empowered to act on the information and requests presented in the document. The roles, activities, and relationships we may say are brought into being by the documentary matrix (created by long institutional histories). Imagine how difficult it would be to institute an entirely new form of required governmental reporting on, for example, one's healthful and unhealthful behaviors. How many new roles and relationships would be brought into being?

How much social resistance there might be by people who do not want to be drawn into this new social regulatory matrix?

Scientific articles make claims, but also make the author and text accountable to the critical reading of the profession. As well, the articles contribute to the communal project of advancing specific sorts of knowledge. The writer must be of a certain status to legitimately adopt the role of claim maker and have hope of being published and read, but that role then affords particular kinds of relations of knowledge exchange. Similarly in reading an article, one enters into a complex set of roles, relations and interactions, depending on one's differential position and location in time in space—whether a competitor proposing a similar claim, someone doing related work wanting to borrow arguments and techniques, an historian later seeking to reconstruct the development of ideas and techniques, or a neophyte seeking to learn from the most prominent articles.

In adopting the role-appropriate forms of reading and writing, individuals enact the values and projects of the community or profession by interpreting, selecting, evaluating, and using the meaning of the text in carrying out the valued projects of the field in light of typical assessments made within the field. To write and read as a financial analyst means to value what financial analysts value; even more the act sustains the very activity and value system of financial analysis, keeping the domain alive in the world.

Nonetheless, value ambivalences and role conflicts may arise both in writing and reading because many people may read any document, each with multiple roles and relationships. Because the texts we write are likely to be visible to multiple audiences, we are often caught in role conflicts as writers—how do we manage dealing with different readers who will evaluate the meanings and persona we project from their various perspectives. Writers may be faced with the traditional concerns of embarrassment and betrayal at a revelation, as when the novelist's families and friends see traces of their lives and the attitudes of the author toward them in a roman á clef. Role conflicts, however, may be more a matter of rhetorical complexity, such as when a corporate report writer needs to be persuasive with the managerial part of the audience on the basis of managerial clarity and financial acuity, attractive to the client part of the audience through responsiveness to their needs, and reassuring, supportive, and appreciative to the employee part of the audience. Role conflict theory has useful things to say on how people manage conflict and develop conflict-mediating mechanisms (Coser, 1966, 1975; Goffman 1959, 1963, 1971; Merton, 1945, 1963, 1976).

In turn the regularly structured conflicts and other interpersonal difficulties engendered by the circulation of texts may give rise to regular structures of communication, interpretation, valuation, and use that help ameliorate or even transform the difficulty into a new set of values, norms and relations.

For example, the emergent complexity of roles around scientific publication created situations where the same small group of people may be claim makers, critical readers, referees, editors, and claim adopters or rejecters with respect to each others' work. To mediate these role conflicts new norms and values arose since the seventeenth century that changed participants' stances toward difficult situations: an obligation towards criticism, a commitment to a higher goal of communal project of science, a commitment to empirical proof. Appropriate attitudes towards conflict thereby became part of the value system of science. In short, commitment to science trumps, buffers, and reframes the personal insults that are built into the game (Bazerman, 1988).

Written documents often enough become enduring parts of a social system—as a continuing record of past acts, agreements, ideas, and established facts. These records are potentially invocable for new uses and actions. Intertextuality (see Chapter ten) invokes a historical social context accessible to all, influencing the continuing behavior of all. Written laws, court precedent, and court rules all shape ongoing judicial activity. The written journalistic record creates social facts that politicians and government officials must take into account. The documentary records of the health care system structure the behavior, information gathering, and judgment-making of health care providers as well as the opportunities for interaction and service for clients. Utterances are acts that condition the landscape for all future actions, but written documents particularly stay more visibly and enduringly on the landscape, may travel further through time and space, have greater stability, and may be multiply reproduced (Bazerman, 1997). For such reasons written texts frequently attain special legal or epistemic status and may gain higher degrees of social attention.

Merton's sociology points to the statuses and roles one holds with respect to the audience, the specific roles one is enacting in the utterance, and how the multiplicity of roles and relationships with parts of the audience may create conflicts. Rhetoric needs to have as much a sense of the disaffiliations and anomie that may condition an audience's response as the forms of identification and subsumption. Mertonian sociology also points to the ways in which the relation with the audience provides an opportunity structure for certain kinds of needs, interests, and actions that can be realized through communication. It additionally points to the structured advantages certain rhetors accumulate and the relative disadvantage others are put at, which Merton labeled the Matthew Effect (Merton, 1968a, 1995).

Finally, if writing mediates social processes, learning to write is a process of socialization into the practices, relations, positions, and activities of social collectivities. Writing in any domain is more than a matter of gaining technical mastery, although that technical mastery may be an important part of becoming

a successful participant in the group. We would do well to start looking at writing in relation to socialization theory and socialization mechanisms. There are already a few forms of educational theory that work on a socialization model, particularly those concerned with an apprenticeship model, such as Legitimate Peripheral Participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) which is concerned with integration into communities of practice, and other theories that are concerned with the formation of learning communities, but all these could be aided by a more detailed account of how individuals are recruited and socialized into groups and adopt groups as reference for behavior. Writing itself provides the means of creating social presence in literacy-mediated social groups; this situation suggests that we need further writing-specific accounts of socialization. For all these reasons rhetoric can use theories which can articulate complex role sets, complex activities, differential social positioning and goals, role conflicts and conflict mediating mechanisms, unanticipated consequences and other emergent social phenomena as they pertain to writing.