

Connecting Micro & Macro through Ethnography

American Sociological Association
Pre-convention course
108th Annual Meeting
August 9, 2013

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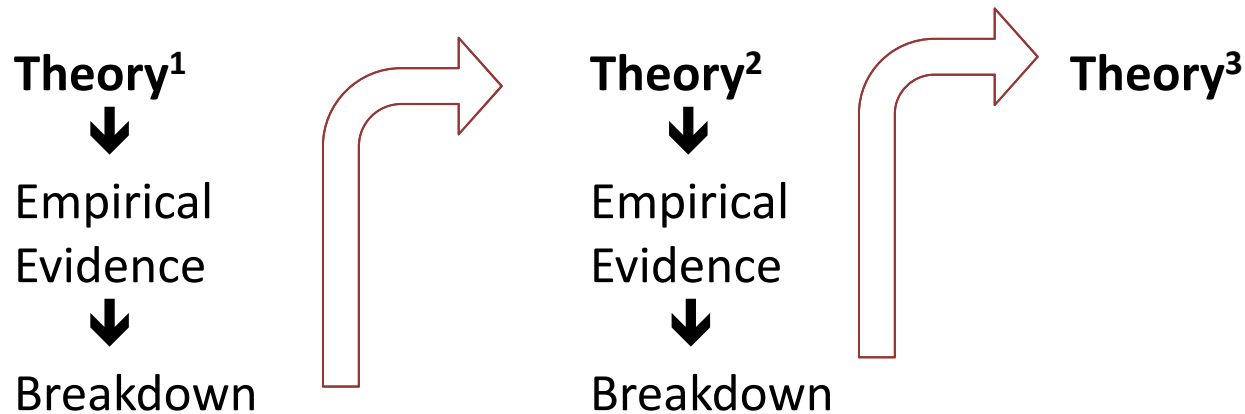
Course Outline

Connecting Micro & Macro through Ethnography

1:30-1:50	Introductions
1:50-2:30	<u>Introduction: Research Design</u> The Role of Theory in Qualitative Research
	The Logic of the Case Study
2:30-3:25	<u>Module 1: Connections</u> Ethnography along the Commodity Chain Mapping Flows of Ideas
3:25-3:35	Break
3:35-4:30	<u>Module 2: Processes</u> Ethnographic Process-Tracing Juxtaposing Timelines
4:30-5:30	<u>Module 3: Frameworks</u> Discourse Analysis Narrative Analysis

The Process of Theory Reconstruction in Ethnography

(adapted from Agar, *Speaking of Ethnography*, 1985).



What makes the field interesting is the violation of some expectation.
An expectation is nothing other than a theory waiting to be explicated.
--Michael Burawoy, *Global Ethnography*, 2000.

What is a Case Study?

- A case captures a set of social (power) relationships
- A case is a “point of entry” into a social process
- A case reveals the operation of a theoretical principle



Research Design

Reasoning from the case

- Case study results are not generalizable, but transferable.
- We need to figure out the universe of other cases to which our results are relevant, and to which they can be transferred.
Walton: we must “figure out what we have a case of.”
- This involves identifying situations with similar social relations where similar forces are at work.



Case Selection 1 –

- Choose a site where you believe the theory you are interested in will be at work—where the factors or forces that you care about are likely to be observed.
- Make sure all relevant relationships are included.

In Walton's *Western Times and Water Wars* (1991), the Owens Valley (California) was a case of local resistance to regional incorporation—communities in rebellion against state usurpation of formerly recognized rights to water.



Case Selection 2—Focus on Moments of Change

John Dewey: study “indeterminate situations”—social settings that are “disturbed, troubled, ambiguous, confused, full of conflicting tendencies...” —*Logic: Theory of Inquiry*, 1938.

Max Gluckman: study contradictions—[Gluckman sought] a context of crisis, a tension or turning, a point of potentiality and multiple possibility.”—Bruce Kapferer, “Situations, Crisis and the Anthropology of the Concrete,” 2005.

Sally Falk Moore: Study “diagnostic events”—events that reveal ongoing contests and conflicts and competitions and efforts to prevent, suppress, or repress them—“Explaining the Present,” 1987.

Doug McAdam and Sidney Tarrow: study “episodes of transgressive contention”—where “mechanisms” or recurrent patterns of change are visible.— “Introduction: *Dynamics of Contention* Ten Years On,” *Mobilization*, 2011.

Research Design

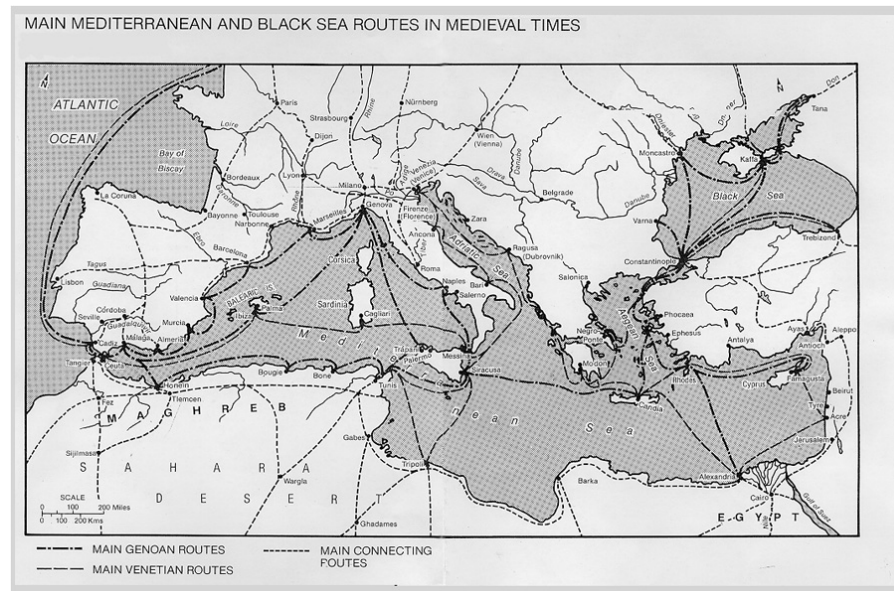


Module 1: CONNECTIONS

“Multi-sited research designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations...with a posited logic of connection among sites.

...Follow the people; follow the thing; follow the metaphor, the life, the story, the conflict.”

George Marcus, “Ethnography In/Of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-sited Ethnography,” 1995.



Method 1: Ethnography along Commodity Chains

- Using secondary sources to map a commodity chain and conducting ethnographic research in one or more “nodes” of the chain

Many global processes take place, not in a “space of place”—a geographically bounded territory, but in a “space of flows”—decentered, but integrated long-distance networks that coordinate the economy (Manuel Castells, *The Informational City*, 1989)

But how can we use ethnography to study a global industry?
A phenomenon that does not happen in a single place, but is dispersed around the globe?



Commodity Chains



Ethnography along the Commodity chain is premised on the idea that macro and micro processes can be studied on the same scale...

“If we wander about inside IBM, if we follow the chain of command of the Red Army, if we inquire in the corridors of the Ministry of Education, if we study the process of selling and buying a bar of soap, we never leave the local level. We are always in interaction with four or five people.”

“The capitalism of Karl Marx or Fernand Braudel is not the total capitalism of the Marxists. It is a skein of somewhat longer networks, of points that become centers of profit and calculation. In following it step by step, one never crosses the mysterious lines that should divide the local from the global.”

“The organization of American big business described by Alfred Chandler is not the Organization described by Kafka. It is a braid of networks materialized in order slips and flow charts.... One can follow the growth of an organization in its entirety without ever changing levels.” ---Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 1993.

Commodity Chains



Example: “Tracing Social Relations through Commodity Chains: The Case of Brazilian Grapes” (J. Collins)

Question: How are increasing quality standards in the agricultural sector met with an extremely low-waged workforce?

Theory: Burawoy’s theory of transition from despotic to hegemonic labor regimes

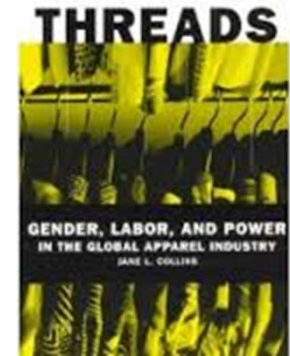
Research:

- Secondary sources to build an understanding of chain as a whole and consumption trends [trade and business press]
- Ethnography in NE Brazil on farms producing grapes for global market



Findings: Farm owners were experimenting with “pre-industrial” forms of production (such as sharecropping) to shift risk/responsibility to workers.

Example: *Threads: Gender, Labor and Power in the Global Apparel Industry* (J. Collins)



Question: Do high-end apparel producers have a different labor process than low-end producers?

Theory: Piore & Sabel's *Second Industrial Divide*, predicting more skilled and autonomous work conditions in high-end work.

Research:

- Secondary sources to build an understanding of the commodity chain
- Ethnography at headquarters and factory sites for high and low-end firms.



Commodity Chains

Figure 1

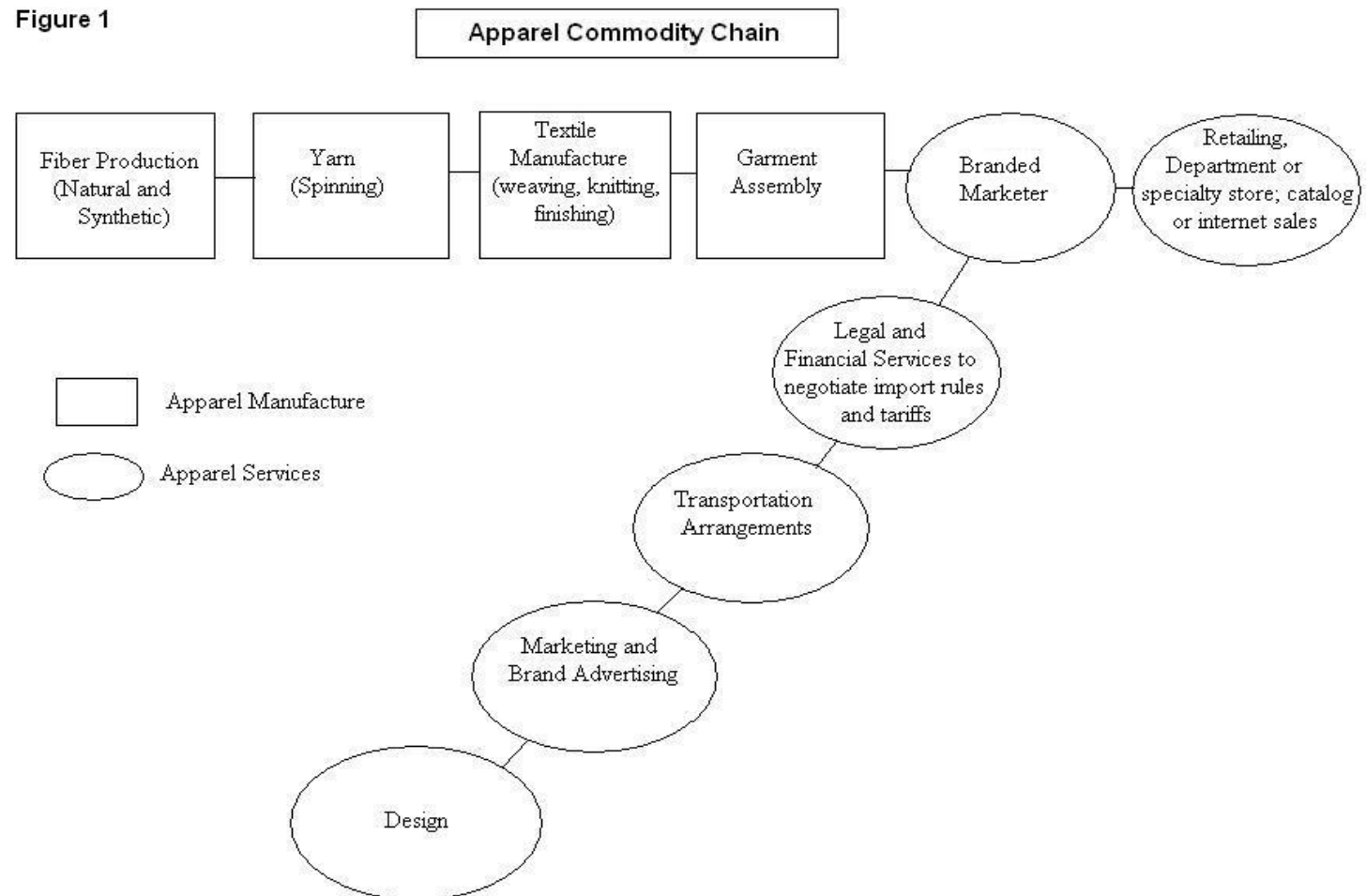


Diagram of High-end Apparel Commodity Chain

Ethnographic Sites for *Threads*



Aguascalientes-Tultex and Liz Claiborne factories



N. Bergen, NJ –
Liz Claiborne
Headquarters

Martinsville,
VA-Tultex
Factory and
Headquarters



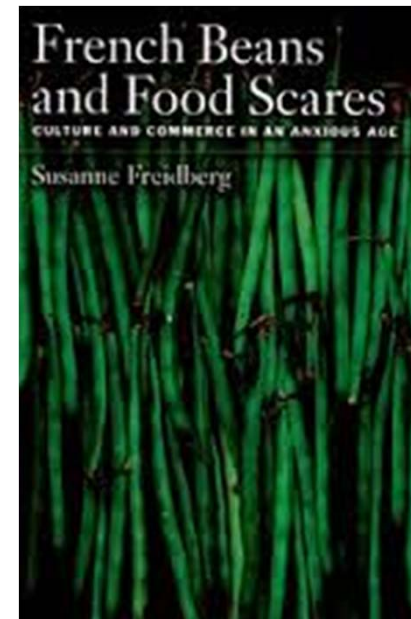
Example: Susanne Friedberg, *French Beans and Food Scares*

Compares two commodity chains for French beans: one from Burkina Faso to France and the other from Zambia to Britain.

Explores the way that colonial legacies of social relations shaped the contemporary economic relations of the commodity chain.

Research sites: grocers and importers in Europe and workers, packers and buyers in Africa.

Friedberg found that modern standards and rules can preserve longstanding relations of power and privilege dating to colonial rule.

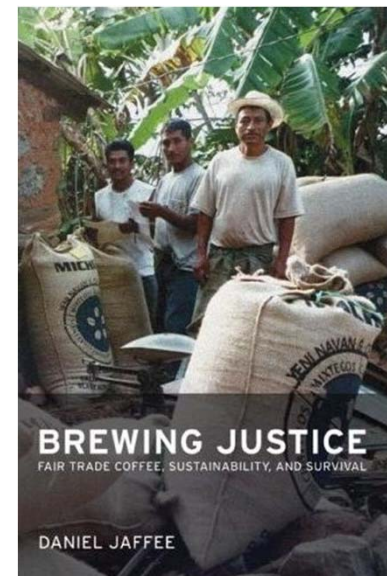


Example: Dan Jaffee, *Brewing Justice: Fair Trade Coffee, Sustainability, and Survival*

Jaffee mapped fair trade and traditional coffee commodity chains.

Research sites: Fair trade organizations in U.S. and Europe. Fair trade and traditional producers in communities of Oaxaca, Mexico.

Findings: Fair trade has community-wide effects not captured in individual family income. Fair trade requires community resources to implement. Economic effects are relatively modest.



Method 2: Mapping Flows of Ideas

Tracing the institutions and networks through which ideas circulate

“Knowledge that makes a difference in changing the world is knowledge that travels and mobilizes...” – Anna Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*, 2005.

“How do new society-wide projects, such as modernization, development, or neoliberal capitalism, emerge and become common sense? ... we need to focus on the particular sites where these ideas, concepts, and policies get debated, crafted, and challenged.” –Michael Goldman, *Imperial Nature*, 2005.



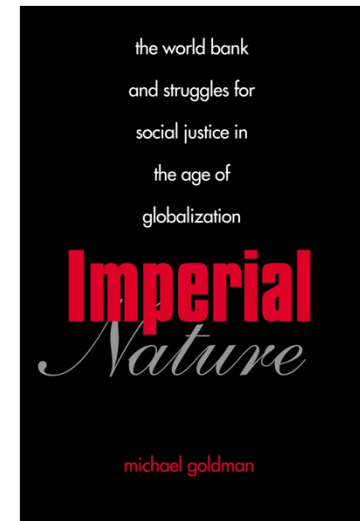
Mapping Ideas

Mapping Flows of Ideas involves

- Studying the idea itself, its various permutations and its history
- Studying the institutions that gave rise to it
- Studying the networks through which it travels
- Studying how it is adapted to local settings (indigenization)



Example: Michael Goldman, *Imperial Nature: The World Bank and Struggles for Social Justice in an Age of Globalization*



Question: How does the World Bank circulate the framework of “green neoliberalism”?

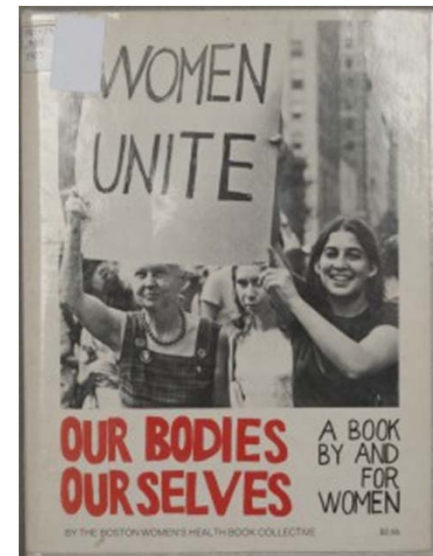
Theory: Foucauldian Theories of knowledge formation

Research:

- Case studies of a project (Nam Theun dam in Laos) and a sector (water).
- Ethnographic research at WB headquarters and many sites where projects and policies were implemented.

Example: Millie Thayer, “Traveling Feminisms”

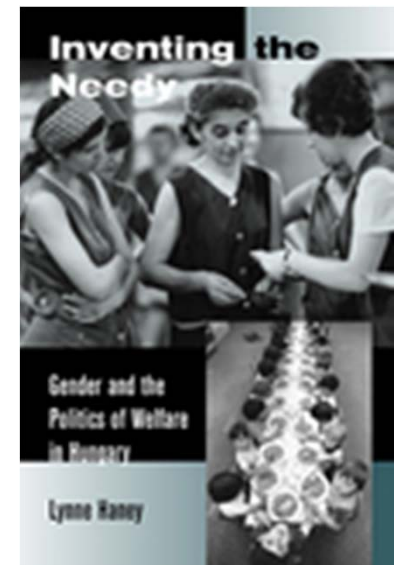
Studied the circulation of feminist ideas about health and the body between U.S. and Brazil, 1980s to present.



Example: Lynne Haney, “Global Discourses of Need”

Studying the IMF and World Bank’s introduction of discourses of need and dependency to Hungarian welfare system during democratization in the 1990s.

Like Thayer, Haney studied the initial movement of ideas and the “indigenization” process whereby local actors adapted them to their situations.



Module 2: PROCESSES

Ethnography can give us “direct access to the level of social relations”

--Daniel Bertaux, “Stories as Clues to Sociological Understanding”

A mechanical model is a “model, the elements of which are on the same scale as the phenomenon...” –Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*



Method 3: Ethnographic Process-Tracing

- Tracking “what follows what” in order to establish “causal chains, sequences, and mechanisms” (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*, 2001).
- Based on the researcher’s observations, but also on “causal emplotment” or ordering of experience found in actor’s narratives (Margaret Somers, “The Narrative Constitution of Identity,” 2004).



“I think you should be more explicit here in step two.”

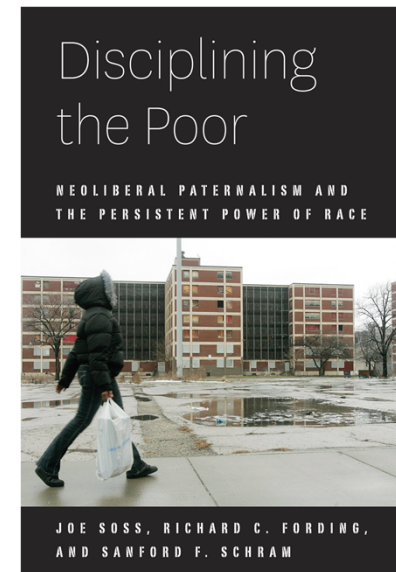
Example: Susan Sterett, “Need and Citizenship after Disaster”

Study of legal implementation of Stafford Act in providing housing for Katrina evacuees in Denver



Example: Joe Soss, et al., *Disciplining the Poor*

Study of welfare caseworker discretion in sanctioning black and white clients in Florida



Process-tracing

Example: Tonya Brito, “Fathers behind Bars”

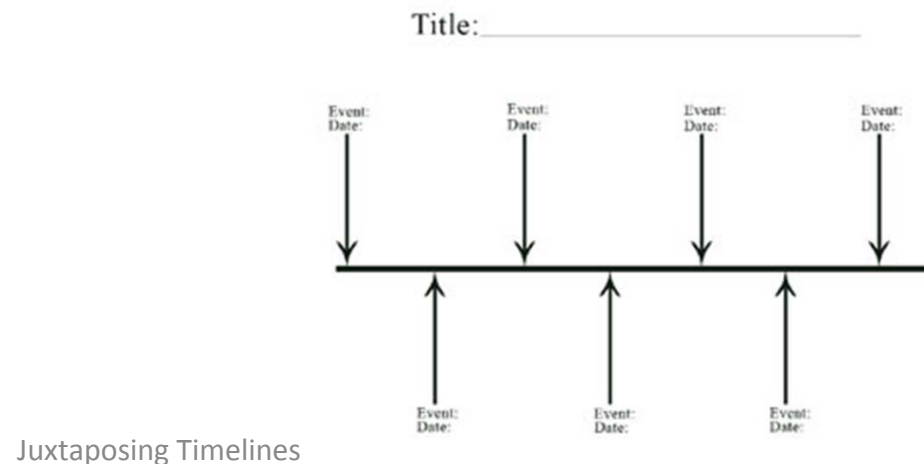
Study of differences in process and outcome for poor fathers charged with nonpayment of child support when represented and not represented by legal counsel



Process-tracing

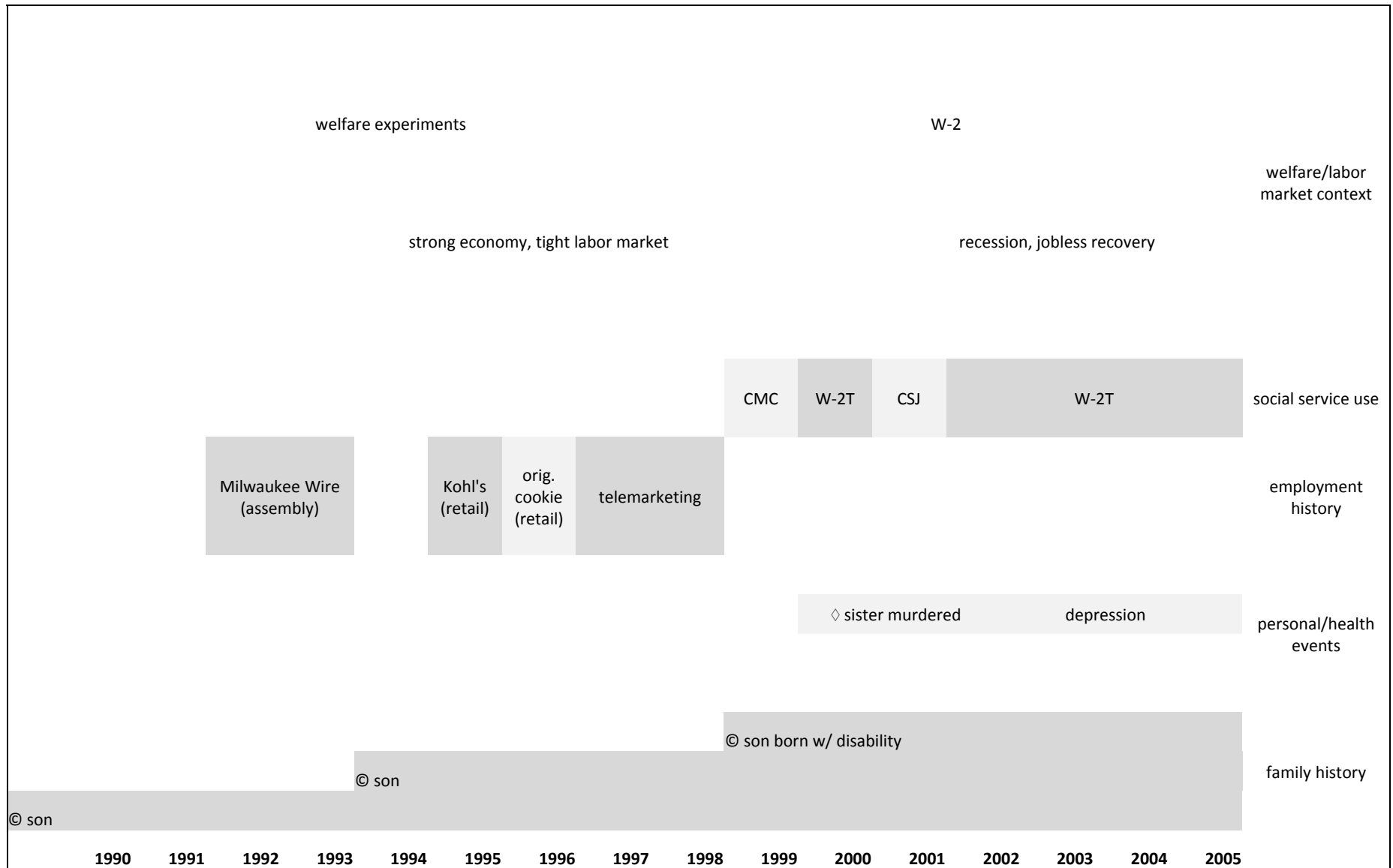
Method 4: Juxtaposing Timelines

- Constructing timelines for life history events and setting them alongside timelines of societal shifts in order to place individual life changes in larger context.
- Using multiple timelines as tools to establish relationships between events in one sphere and those in another.
- Useful because in every case there is the “foreground preoccupation” of the actors or commentators and the “background conditions” that they may not be able to articulate. – Sally Falk Moore, “Explaining the Present,” 1987.



Economy/ Policy Changes	Work Events	Family/ Personal Events	Social Service Events
1980 WI welfare “experiments”			
1996 welfare reform bill			
2001 recession			
jobless recovery			

Example: Analytical Grid for Collins and Mayer, *Both Hands Tied*, 2010.



Completed grid for participant,
Both Hands Tied

Juxtaposing Timelines

Findings from Timeline Analysis--*Both Hands Tied*

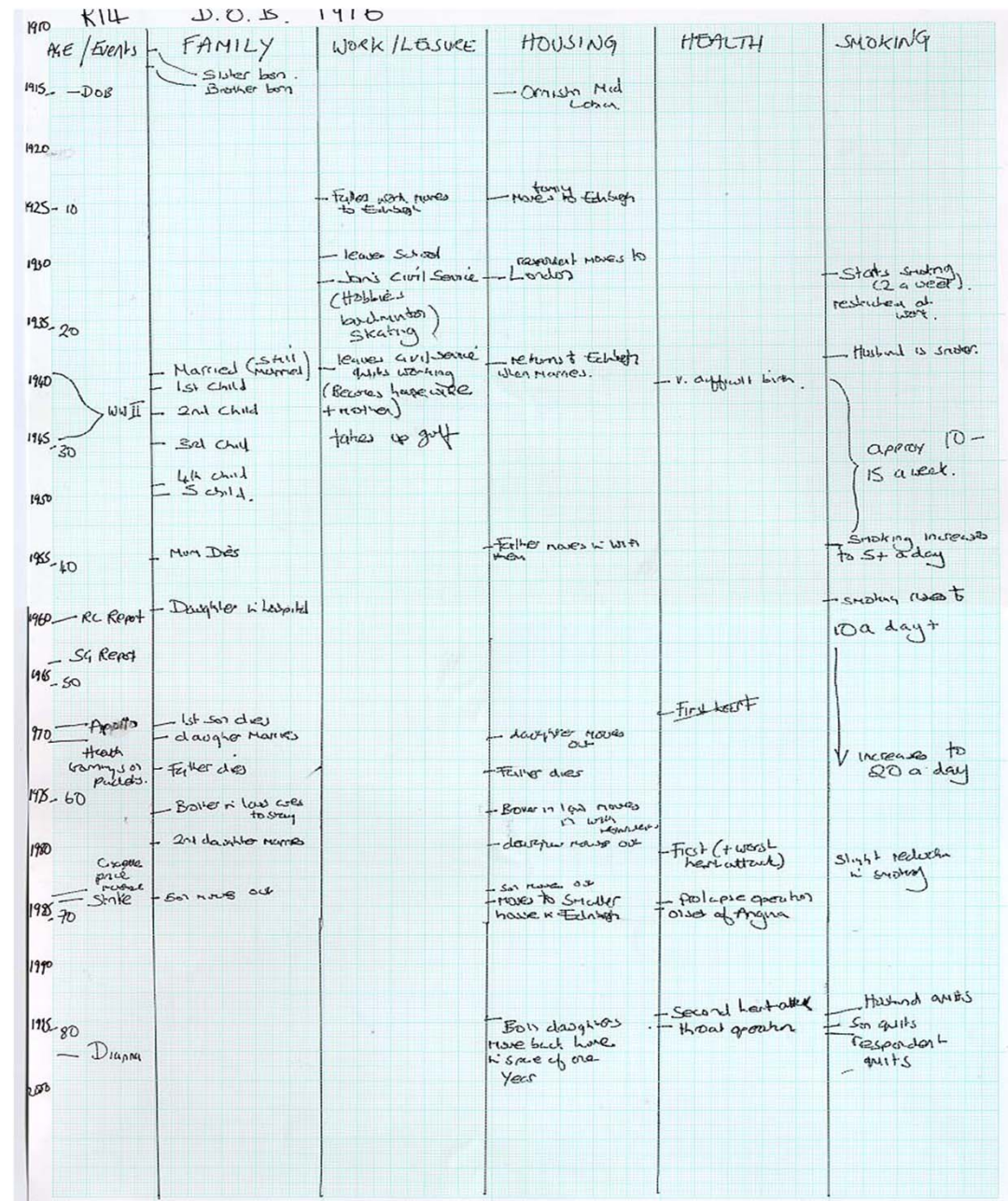
- 94% of welfare entries resulted from a crisis of care
- Labor market reentry through welfare reform's "community service jobs" led to downward mobility



Juxtaposing Timelines

Example:

“Life Course Grid”
with multiple timelines
from Parry, Thompson,
and Fowkes, 1999.



Juxtaposing Timelines

Module 3: FRAMEWORKS

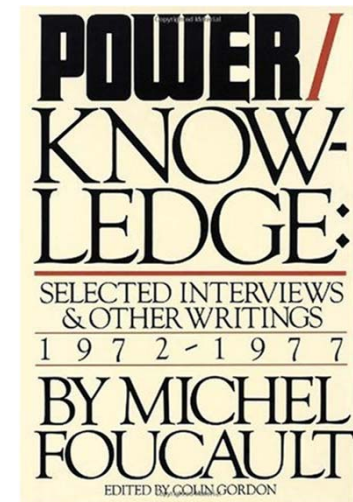
Ethnography is always mediated through language. The stories participants tell us are never “typical,” but always “conjunctural.” They always contain clues about how historical forces come together in an individual life, revealing the intersection of biography and society.

Discourse Analysis and Narrative Analysis are two ways of linking micro and macro in ethnographic interviews.



Method 5: Discourse Analysis

- A discourse (according to Foucault) is a system of ideas, attitudes, beliefs and practices.
- Discourse analysis is a study of our current truths, how they are maintained, and how they are related to power.
- Discourse is never the product or possession of an individual. It is by definition shared. It is rare that we run into a wholly new or idiosyncratic discourse.
- Finding the way our narrator's words connect to larger discourses is a way of connecting micro and macro.



Some analytical questions for discourse analysis

- What is being represented here as a truth or as a norm?
- How is this constructed? What 'evidence' is used?
- What is left out? What is in the foreground and what is in the background?
- What is made problematic and what is not?
- What alternative meanings/explanations are ignored?
- What is kept apart and what is joined together?
- What interests are being mobilized and served by this and what are not?
- How has this come to be?
- What identities, actions, practices are made possible, desirable or required by this way of thinking? Which are disallowed?
- What is normalized and what is pathologized?
- When and how did the discourse emerge?
- Who uses it?



Discourses are built of concepts and propositions.

Example: *Neoliberalism* is a discourse about the best way to organize society. Some of its key concepts are markets, privatization, deregulation, competition, and personal responsibility.

Some of its key propositions: are “markets are efficient distributors of social goods;” regulation interferes with market rationality; public and communal ownership create perverse incentives”...

Goldman’s “green neoliberalism” (described in *Imperial Nature*) is a variant of this discourse.



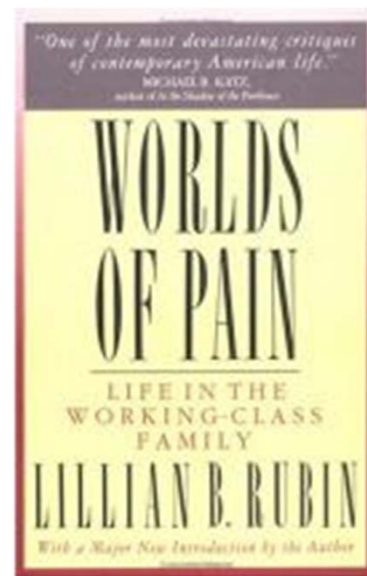
Example. Emily Martin, *The Woman in the Body*.

Explores discourses of motherhood and maternal attachment.



Example. Lillian Rubin, *Worlds of Pain: Life in the Working Class Family*.

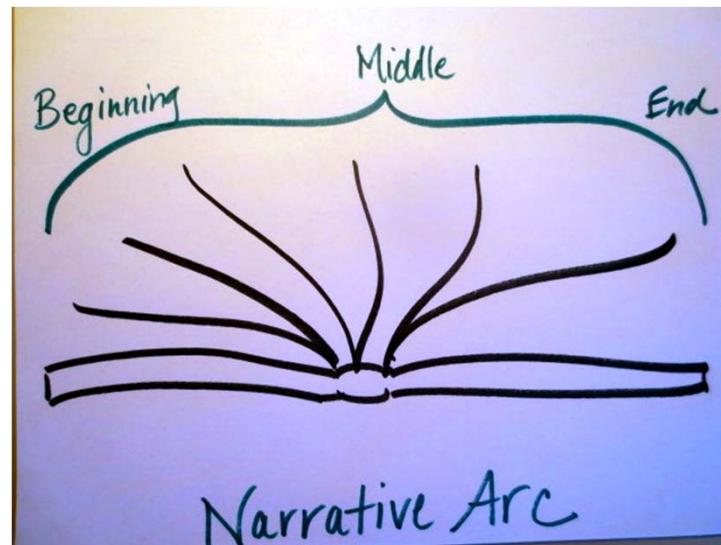
Explores mid-twentieth century discourses of gender/family clashing with emerging liberal feminist discourses of self-actualization and choice.



Discourse Analysis

Method 6: Narrative Analysis

- A narrative is an account of a set of connected events.
- It has the structure of a story (which is not to say that it is always chronological).
- In connecting events, it makes explicit or implicit causal claims.
- Not every chunk of an interview is a narrative.



Some analytical questions for narrative analysis

- Who are the characters?
- What is the plot, or event structure?
- What are the turning points?
- What is the evaluative system (where the narrator assigns certain events prominence)?
- What is the explanatory system (where people *explicitly* tell us their causal arguments, interpreting the past and providing a sense of what will or should happen in the future).
- What are the contradictions
- What are the silences (things you would expect to hear about, but don't).

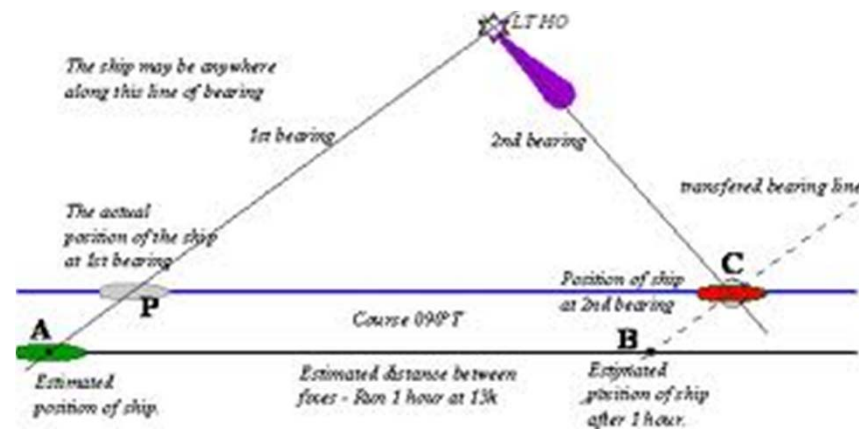


Analyzing plot in narratives

Events are the building blocks, but narrators render them understandable by connecting them. They provide the logic or syntax.

Plot is not necessarily chronological. It may involve flashbacks, may repeat and loop back to a theme.

Collingwood: Plot vs. Story. Two sightings of a ship is the plot. The actual trajectory is the story.



Example: Alessandro Portelli, *The Battle of Vale Giulia*

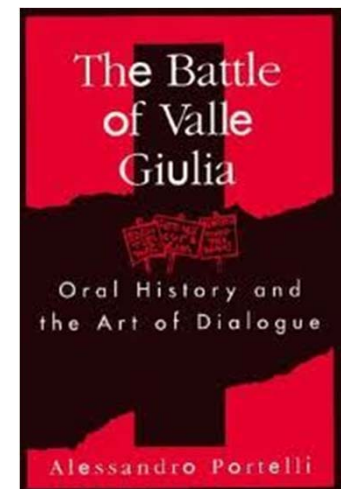
Men used war stories to “locate themselves in history.”

Participation in the military and war marked their entrance into the public sphere and contact with the organization and technology of the modern state.

Women used “hospital stories” in exactly the same way.

Men’s and women’s accounts shared narrative themes:

- leaving homes to deal with death
- facing the state in its bureaucratic and technical aspects
- dealing with hierarchies, machineries, and science
- “standing up to the ‘big man’”



Example: Daniel Bertaux, “Stories as Clues to Sociological Understanding”

In their narratives, bakers presented themselves as participants in the artisanal bread industry—an institution threatened by large mills and food corporations and “regenerating itself daily through the strenuous efforts of 200,000 people.

The past is seen from the vantage point of the present.

People who had been bakery workers in the 1930s and 40s and remained bakery workers all their lives complained bitterly about work conditions. People who were bakery workers but passed through apprenticeship to become master bakers (with apprentices of their own) didn’t remember or made light of the hardship.

