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Ethnographic Analyticsⁱ

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Analytical sociology is designed to bridge the gap between theory and empirical research by incorporating action-based theories into quantitative research of macro-level phenomena (Hedstrom 2005). Thus, the principles of analytical sociology primarily are for scholars using quantitative methods, as most of the chapters in this volume indicate. Ironically, several of these principles are the essence of ethnography. Analytical sociology urges a turning away from variable-centered approaches toward strategies that produce explanations of events and outcomes by revealing the mechanisms that generate the observed relationships. It is designed to examine key social processes and break them down into their primary components, showing how they work together to produce outcomes. The focus shifts from variables to actors, actions, and the “cogs and wheels” that respond to and reproduce social phenomena. Arriving at explanation is the goal. In crucial ways, however, ethnography marches to a different drummer. Moreover, although all ethnography has important characteristics in common, within it are vastly different approaches to the social. No single work can be taken as representative.

How then might we understand ethnography in relation to analytical sociology? I begin by identifying two divisions within ethnography in order to situate analytic ethnography within it. Then I consider some exemplars of analytic ethnography, identifying its distinctive characteristics and internal divisions. I present them to set up a discussion comparing analytic ethnography with analytical sociology to show similarities and differences. In conclusion, I discuss the two as they relate to the primary goal of

analytical sociology: achieving explanations that make macro-micro connections. It is trite if not cliché to make the simple argument that merging qualitative and quantitative work will lead to integration of macro- and micro-level understandings. Further, many might argue that such a merger is as undesirable as it is unachievable because genre distinctions are what make the social understandable. However, it is those very genre distinctions that make more complete explanations possible. The similarities and differences between analytical sociology and analytic ethnography described in this paper allow a more empirically grounded consideration of what macro-micro- integration might entail and how we might proceed. To illustrate the potential, I consider how the signaling research of Podolny (1993, 2005), Bacharach and Gambetta (2001), Gambetta and Hamill (2005), and Vaughan (1983, 1986, 1996, 2002), authors in this volume using different methods, levels, and units of analysis, might be integrated to further this goal.

What is analytic ethnography? No doubt most ethnographers would argue, and correctly, that all ethnography is analytic. This general point of agreement stands in contrast to a more recent history of contentious debate about the specifics of what ethnography is and how it should be done. The practice of ethnography has diversified into different fieldwork traditions, each with its own approach and epistemological assumptions (see e.g., Hammersley 1992; Atkinson et al. 2001; DeVault 2007). To purposefully oversimplify to respond to the central issue of this book, I artificially collapse this complexity into two ethnographic tracks: analytic ethnography and critical ethnography (for the complexity, see Denzin and Lincoln 1994: 105-352). By analytic ethnography, I mean a realist approach to field observations of individual interaction that is science-based, assumes that evidence of causes and explanations can be found, and proceeds inductively to formulate an explanation. By critical ethnography, I mean an interpretive approach to fieldwork that rejects scientific positivism, asserting subjectivism, language, and discourse are crucial to understanding the meanings upon which individual actions are based.

In the 50s, 60s, and even early 70s, ethnographers generally agreed that ethnography was analytic ethnography as defined above. It relied upon the systematic gathering and analysis of extensive data gained through participant observation in a social setting in order to explore some complex social process, event, or activity. Explanation

was defined as identifying the distinctive social practices that exist and why they exist. The term “analytic ethnography” first appeared in the literature in Lofland (1971). Several ethnographers began writing about data gathering, analysis, and theorizing, laying down a set of scientific principles that became guidelines for many ethnographers. These principles were critical of quantitative methods and grand theory, yet at the same time they were wrapped in its language and adopted some of its standards for theory development. This effort aimed at training new ethnographers but also at gaining legitimacy for qualitative work criticized for its looseness and lack of systemicity in a discipline dominated by quantitative research and scientific methods. Two received a lasting place in the canon: Glaser and Strauss’ grounded theory (1967), and Blumer’s (1954) “sensitizing concepts.”ⁱⁱⁱ

By the late 70s, and concurrent with similar critical movements in anthropology, history, and literature, a new genre of qualitative research took hold that focused on meanings and subjectivities, textual analysis and writing, autoethnography, and a revisionist ethnography self-consciously aware of the historic moment and the social location of both author and the people whose lives were being considered. The new work was expressly political and critical – of positivism, power relations, structured inequalities, and exclusionary textual, research, and writing practices. These new directions were reinforced by research in social studies of science showing that scientific facts and technical artifacts were the products of social, economic, political, and cultural factors. Critical ethnography gradually achieved an impact on analytic ethnography, visible in scholarly writing that embraced researcher reflexivity and the social positioning of interpretative work by both ethnographers and the people whose lives they enter. These new ways of thinking did not change its realist orientation, however. Efforts to clarify and refine systematic scientific methods continued. Katz (1983) reclaimed the quantitative lexicon of reliability, representativeness, reactivity, and replicability by showing how fieldwork embodied these very scientific standards. An all-encompassing textbook of systematic methods for qualitative analysis appeared (Miles and Huberman 1984).

In his 1985 “Analytic Ethnography,” Lofland clarified realist methods in the midst of the alternative critical approaches by then available to ethnographers. He

reiterated the goal of general theory: the identification of generic propositions that reflected the social analytic categories that the data at hand exemplified (1985: 40). Significant historically was the reminder that ethnographers were in the business of science and the production of general propositions that went beyond the individual case. However, Lofland had not gone far enough (Snow, Morrill, and Anderson 2003). The purpose of analytic ethnography was general explanation, but Lofland had said nothing about how to get from generic propositions to theory. Even as analytic ethnography had flourished and systematic methods were deployed, the emphasis on going from particulars to a general explanation had apparently been lost. Glaser and Strauss had distinguished between substantive theory, achieving an explanation of the case under investigation, and formal theory, achieving general explanation that encompassed not only the case at hand but other cases of similar phenomena. As practiced by most analytic ethnographers, however, the constant comparative method that Glaser and Strauss advocated was reduced to the constant comparison between data and theory, thus dropping the comparison with other cases. Substantive theory, not formal theory, was the usual product (Strauss 1995).

The result has been a proliferation of research diverse in almost every important way, with little coherence within the specialty. Explanatory theory remains the goal, but scholars have different understandings about what theory is, how it is achieved, the appropriate unit and level of analysis, and even the meaning of generalizability. To demonstrate the diversity on these five issues, I present contemporary exemplars of analytic ethnography. My selection of exemplars was based on three criteria: 1) the authors each published an article or a book about a particular method, naming it, and explaining how theory might result from its use, or alternatively 2) they used or developed a method – that method unarticulated – to create a theory or concepts that they demonstrate empirically in published work to be generalizable, and 3) each represents a genre, standing in for other research in analytical ethnography with a similar understanding of explanatory theory, how to go about it, unit and level of analysis, and generalizability, yet carried out by an ethnographer whose interests give it her or his own analytical imprint. To keep to the theme of this book, I exclude work in anthropology, although I include as an exemplar the work of one anthropologist (Latour) because his

research and theory have become so influential to analytic ethnography in sociology. Because my focus is on diversity in contemporary practice, I exclude Glaser and Strauss (1967), which started it all and, to a greater or lesser extent, undergirds almost all analytic ethnography. To best illustrate the current diversity, the order of presentation of the exemplars is micro-, followed by micro-meso-, and finally micro-meso-macro- analysis. Note that each approach is shaped by a theory about how the social world works, which in turn shapes the method and level of analysis.

Varieties of Analytic Ethnography:

Theory, Method, and Level of Analysis

Katz: A Theory of Situational Transcendence

A phenomenologist and symbolic interactionist, Katz takes meanings grounded in the subject's experience as the proper focus of investigation. Katz generated a formal theory of situational transcendence to explain all varieties of crime in Seductions of Crime: Moral and Sensual Attractions in Doing Evil (1988). In identifying the causes of crime, he treats antecedent conditions as "background factors" (social class, gender, race, defects in the offender's environment), instead locating the causes in the "foreground": aspects of the immediate situation in which the crime occurred. Background factors, he states, fail to address "the lived experience of criminality", or in his words, the attractiveness or seduction of crime in a particular situation. It is the foreground of criminality that makes a crime a sensible, satisfying, compelling action to the offender. Explanation, for Katz, resides in identifying the sensual, aesthetic elements of social life as they drive action. He develops the theory inductively by cross-case comparison of six kinds of crime: "Righteous Slaughter," "Sneaky Thrills," "Doing Stick-Up," "The Bad-Ass," "Street Elites," and "Primordial Evil." Each chapter builds from many examples, based on combinations of ethnography, interviews, and published historical, biographical, and research accounts. His causal theory is that emotional response to the situation drives the criminal act. In violent crimes, emotions - humiliation, degradation, frustration - produce a socially transcendent rage that compels the person to commit an act that

overcomes that situation. Committed in defense of social identity, the crime at the moment of commission becomes a morally justified, rational act in the eyes of the offender.

Demonstrating both the priority of foreground factors over background factors and reinforcing his claim for a formal theory of all kinds of crime, he varies social class, showing how middle class and upper class people are seduced by the situation in property crime and white-collar crime. For example, in “Sneaky Thrills,” college students engage in a variety of property crimes (shoplifting, joyriding, vandalism, burglary) not for material reasons but because of the power of the object, its availability, the ease of taking it, and the emotional thrill of transcending the mundane by getting away with a forbidden act. The emotional component of his theory is elaborated further in How Emotions Work (Katz 1999). He examines the emotions associated with rage, laughter, shame, and crying – again using cross-case comparison of different social settings – to investigate emotions as our way of sensing the meanings currently present that transcend expression in the immediate situation. In both books, from different cases - each type of crime, each type of emotion - he inductively generates a substantive theory in each chapter. Then, comparing all chapters to look for similarities and differences, he abstracts a formal causal theory of situational transcendence.

Becker/Strauss: Social Worlds

A social world is a group comprised of all those with a shared commitment to the same activity. The analytic focus is on people interacting around the same thing. This version of analytic ethnography grew out of the social organization and interactionism traditions of the Chicago school. It was the independent invention of two people. Becker (1960) developed a sociological interpretation of commitment as the basis for people constructing a “consistent line of activity” that facilitates collective action. Strauss (1959) understood identities as commitments to reference groups. Becker and Strauss both trained with Blumer and Hughes, developing their ideas in different substantive areas - Strauss in medicine (Strauss 1964), Becker in art (1982). Social worlds analysis is a sociology of situations and process, agency over determinism, change rather than statics

or reproduction, cooperation as much as conflict. (Becker and Pessin 2006) Still, structure and its reproduction may come into the explanation. For Strauss, structures are the products of interaction that endure. They result from commitments of individual actors to collective action – usually work of some kind (Clarke 1991: 129). For Becker, structure is reinforced by 1) “conventions,” or ways of behaving that are common to the members of the group and make collective action possible (1982), and 2) “social inertia,” which has people acting as they have in the past, so in circumstances of uncertainty they tend fall back on conventions - habits and routines - rather than innovating (1995).

These differences result in different approaches within the genre. Following Becker, analysts of collective activity include all the people necessary to produce some outcome or product, their cooperation made possible by their shared knowledge of conventional ways of doing the work together. Explanation is achieved by showing all the contributions, though not all contributors necessarily interact. For analysts following Strauss, the unit of analysis is the interaction of people in a world or arena. Arenas are social worlds that combine around larger mutual concerns for collective activity. In arenas, typically each participant is a representative of their social world, thus arenas are often a site of conflict. “Negotiated order” becomes a focal point for empirical investigation because of differences that co-exist within common purpose. For both approaches, the boundaries of social worlds are arbitrary, defined by the activity being studied and determined by the researcher. Substantive theory, not formal theory, is the goal, although the approach has produced many useful generalizable concepts: e.g., “awareness contexts,” “conventions.” Perhaps the concept most widely diffused across sociology from its social worlds origins is “boundary object” (Star and Griesemer 1989). Boundary objects are mechanisms that enable interaction and cooperation across boundaries. Showing the influence of Actor-Network theory (to be discussed), boundary objects may be theories or concepts, tangible products of science and technology, any object that draws people together in a common activity.

Fine: Small Groups

A social psychologist, Fine studies interaction in small groups. His perspective is that the set of actors and their group “peoples” the description and analysis (2003). For Fine, it is in the small group that structure, interaction, and culture come together. He excludes macro-level forces, investigating the meso-level indirectly as it is displayed in everyday interaction. He is influenced by social worlds analysis: structure materializes at the local level through negotiated order (2003: 44). His goal is to understand a setting and its theoretical implications, so explanation for him is substantive theory, not formal theory. By generalizability, he means 1) “the ability of the reader to generalize from the setting” to other situations (2003: 41), 2) studying multiple sites so that his results represent and thus apply equally to each, and 3) his ability to analytically link one study to the next. He demonstrates this latter kind of generalizability by showing the connections between his eight books, all on different subjects (2003).

For example, in With the Boys (1987), he observed 10 Little League baseball teams in five leagues, generalizability across teams built into the comparison. The research question was by what mechanisms is culture created and embedded in small groups. The answer for the teams was that their baseball culture was an “idioculture” constructed inductively as the boys on a team interacted. Interaction is the central focus. What Katz calls “background” factors – race, class, and gender – and related cultural ideologies in the external environment are not part of the explanation (cf. Grasmuck 2005). The condition that these teams were summer only and had changing members from year to year led Fine to the question that governed his second investigation: how is culture produced in groups that are not as ephemeral and more interested in active culture production? Thus, his next project was a study of fantasy gaming and groups of gamers (1983) that demonstrated the exact robust culture that interested him. He does not go into a setting with a particular theory to develop, so the idea of idioculture is not part of this second analysis. He shows how fantasy gamers assume forms of talk and identity that vary by the activity. In three projects (1985, 1996, 2007) he added formal organizations and occupations to the mix. Rather than studying them as meso-level structures in their own right, he identified occupational and organizational influences as they were visible in negotiations at the local level. For Fine, patterns and theoretical explanation are in the details of each study, and although each study is analytically linked to the next in his

view, the findings of one are not linked to the next in a visible (to the reader) attempt to build a generalizable theory or concepts. Each project is a piece of the structure-interaction-culture puzzle.

Latour: Actor-Network Theory

Actor-networks are mechanisms for accomplishing social goals. The units of analysis are individuals and objects (ideas, technology, laboratories, farmers, animals, bacteria, mosquitoes) brought into regular relations to one another with regard to some scientific or technical pursuit. Actor-network theory developed in the sociology of science and technology by Callon, Latour, and Law, but is perhaps more frequently associated with Latour, who developed and demonstrated ANT (as it became known) over three books (Latour and Woolgar 1979; Latour 1986, 1987). ANT retains the constructivist approach to the development of facts and adds a political interest element. It is distinguished by its innovative definition of social actors in networks as both humans and objects, or “actants.” Objects act (e.g., bring people together in interaction), thus are necessary to understanding social relations.

The research focus is how the different elements come together in a network to act as a unit to achieve some purpose and how that purpose is achieved. “Translation” is the enabling mechanism. Translation has four stages (Callon 1986): 1) Defining the problem to be solved and the necessary actants to accomplish it; 2) Getting actors interested and negotiating the terms of involvement; 3) Enrolling actors to participate; 4) Mobilizing to convert enrollment to active support. Although political interests are integral to the explanation of network formation, they are micro-level action-drivers for individuals: power comes from an actor’s ability to align others to accomplish his or her interests. Like Katz, ANT is agency-based and eschews background factors and determinism. However, Katz’s actors are emotion-driven, their choices explained and made rational by the immediate social situation; Latour’s are rational, calculating, self-interested political entrepreneurs operating in a world that goes beyond the interaction in the laboratory. Like Fine, ANT’s level of analysis is micro-meso, but in ANT the meso-

level is an objective structure: networks are produced by actors but also directly investigated as actors in their own right.

Like the boundary definition problem for social worlds analysis, network boundaries are ambiguous; the researcher determines the humans and objects that belong. ANT aims for substantive theory, not formal theory, and it does not attend to the positivist concerns of reliability, replication, representativeness, or generalizability. In fact, in keeping with the constructionist approach, those values are part of the ambiguity of the scientific enterprise. Yet ANT research is a realist project: reflexivity on the part of the researcher and the actors studied is not incorporated. Interestingly, it is the inclusion of non-human objects that differentiates ANT from the accusation of relativism that plagues other constructionist work in science and technology studies.

Burawoy: Extended Case Method

Burawoy's method differs from the previous exemplars by bridging the micro-macro divide as well as the analytic ethnography-critical ethnography divide. In Manufacturing Consent (1979), his realist approach was joined with a first-person presentation of self as a tool for reflexive insights into the work process, worker-management relations, and structural racial and power divides. The unit of analysis is the workplace, or perhaps more accurately, the social organization of work, analyzed within history and macro-level forces of production. By extended case method, he means a case extends into history and into the future, as each day in the field shows the evolving situation; from micro- to macro-level (or local to extra-local) forces; and comparatively, to other cases (1991, 1992, 2000). Not all practitioners of this method investigate work and work processes, but all strive to understand regimes of power and how they reproduce themselves by extending their analyses in these three ways. The empirical work also varies in the way it depicts the relation between local and extra-local forces.

Explanation moves forward by refutation of existing theory that ethnographers carry into a setting, not grounded theorizing (1998; 2003). Burawoy argues that epistemological underpinning of the extended case method is that there is not one model of science, but two. He juxtaposes "positivist science" with the "reflexive science" of

ethnography. Each brings pre-existing theories about how the world works into their interaction with the other. Although ethnography violates the key principles of positive science, Burawoy argues that positivist science also violates those principles and how, for ethnography, those very flaws are “virtues to be explored” (1998). Rather than showing how ethnography fits positivist principles, he redefines the principles to fit ethnography. For example, both a survey interview and ethnography are interventions in the other person’s life. Whereas positive science creates controls to try to bracket the research subject and distance the researcher (and fails), reflexive science *uses* the reaction to the ethnographer’s presence, which surfaces hidden aspects of the situation. Each day is an intervention to explore the hypothesis generated the day before. Whereas positive science cannot control for the multiple interpretations that a subject brings to the question asked, reflexive science uses those variations to capture all the aspects of the social situation.

Burawoy sets aside critiques about the generalizability of ethnography and case studies by arguing that generalizability is a process, not an end point; reflexive science moves from incident to incident, from case to case, successively acquiring more generality. Cases are not compared to formulate some general law because each occurs under different historical, political, and economic circumstances. Thus, the comparison illuminates the differences and dynamics at the macro level and how they materialize in the local.

Bourdieu: Field, Capital, Habitus.

Bourdieu analyzed the mechanisms that reproduced social hierarchy and inequality. He worked out his theory and its central concepts in case-by-case elaboration in different social settings over his career. Sallaz and Zavisca (2007) trace the evolution of his theory by topic and chronologically: social structure and social action from the Kabyle; the reproduction of inequality in education in France; social inequality in cultural production and consumption; the theory of the state through language, education, and housing (e.g., 1962, 1984, 1988, 1990, 2005). As a result of his cross-case comparisons, Bourdieu merged the polar dichotomies of macro-micro, subjectivist-objectivist, and phenomenological-structural in a formal theory, itself comprised of theories and

methodologies designed to bridge these dichotomies. Bourdieu's theory also bridges the analytic ethnography-critical theory divide by incorporating an important role for history, social location, and reflexivity within a realist project (see esp. Wacquant 2004b).

In contrast to Burawoy's view of how larger social forces materialize or impact the micro level, Bourdieu identified a subjective mediating mechanism. Habitus is a system of subjective dispositions acquired as a response to a person's position in the field or fields. It is embodied, informing a logic of practice that is enacted in everyday life, reproducing the structures of the field. Bourdieu's theory leaves room for agency, but agents reproduce existing structures. Actors develop a feel (habitus) for the game (the field). The field is a site of constant struggle, where people jockey for resources, status, and control over outcomes. The game is a highly competitive one, in which forms of capital – symbolic, social, cultural, physical – are a determinate of success for individuals. Individuals are not defined by their social class, but by their position in the field or fields and the amounts of each kind of capital they possess. Power is conceptualized as symbolic violence to which subordinated individuals are complicit in their domination.

Bourdieu's theory is relational, the concepts designed to explain the internal dynamics of "social space". However, the central concepts of field, habitus, and capital have rarely been joined in a single analysis (Sallaz and Zavisca 2007; Emirbayer and Johnson 2007; Dobbin 2007). Instead, each concept has had a separate research trajectory. Despite the violation of Bourdieu's relational principle, this practice has been extremely productive, each concept repeatedly elaborated and confirmed in different social settings. Habitus may be the concept least investigated empirically by sociologists, and rarely as the linking mechanism between levels of analysis that he intended (but see Hallett 2003; Wacquant 2004a; Vaughan 1996).

Smith: Institutional Ethnography

Institutional ethnography is both a theory and a method about new practices of power that accompanied the development of corporate capitalism and continue to maintain it (Smith 1987, 1990, 2005). Institutions develop conceptual practices:

discourses of power and control that are conveyed through policies, contracts, charts and time sheets, accounting records, job categories, diagnostic and testing practices. Exploring the relation between macro-level institutional factors and everyday life, Smith's empirical focus is on how institutional texts and discourses coordinate work processes by shaping peoples' lives into categories. The research question is how do institutions produce outcomes needed for institutional action. Ruling relations are embedded in these new technologies of control, which make power less visible to those being controlled. They work by organizing the social reality of others. Smith's orientation is Marxist, but a Marxism in combination with feminism and ethnomethodology. The point of empirical entry into the social is work; but work broadly defined to include both invisible and visible work – the work of students finding their way to class, housework and shopping, formal venues of professional offices and factories. Like Burawoy and Bourdieu, institutional ethnography also bridges analytic ethnography and critical ethnography. Smith's realist approach is joined with feminist standpoint theory: the daily experience of ruling relations as understood from the social position of the powerless; reflexive sensitivity to the social location of the researcher is integral to the research

Research has followed three substantive tracks. One is the work process in formal organizations. Ethnographers examine how workers, managers, and clients alike are controlled by institutional ideologies that materialize in documents (e.g., Diamond 1992). The second is invisible work in life outside the formal organization, where conceptual practices of power are more indirect but equally effective as social control (e.g., Devault 1991). Institutional ideologies recognize some kinds of work and not others, in particular the activities of women raising children, doing housework, preparing meals (Devault 2006). These activities are regulated by gendered ideologies in text and discourse. A third research trajectory is how institutional ideologies strive to bring certain categories of people under the jurisdiction of others, for example, delinquents, the homeless, welfare mothers, children (e.g., Luken and Vaughan 2006). The end result is substantive theory for each case, but general explanation is sought in a different way. From examination of many kinds of work, the experience of subordination across cases is being understood. Many institutional ethnographers are interested in "mapping" institutional processes in

order to promote change, e.g., the processing of offenders in juvenile justice (Wood 2007).

Vaughan: Analogical Theorizing

Analogical theorizing develops formal theory by cross-case (hospitals, schools, families) rather than same-case (all hospitals) comparison. The basis is Simmel's formal sociology, which urges sociologists to extract form from content to find common processes and structures in similar activities across different social settings. Lovers break up as con men cool out marks as bosses fire employees as children terminate monopoly games (Vaughan 1986: 188-195). The method recognizes the role of analogy in case selection and comparison, in the cognitive process of developing concepts and theories, and in bridging the macro-micro gap (Vaughan 1992; for examples, see Vaughan 1983, 1986, 1996, 2002, 2004). Several well-known analytic ethnographers have developed theory by cross case comparison without describing their method (e.g., Goffman 1952, 1961; Blau 1964; see also Katz and Bourdieu, this paper). Of those ethnographers who have, none have acknowledged the role of analogy (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Prus 1987; Eisenhardt 1989:540-41; Strauss and Corbin 1990; Strauss 1995; Morrill 1995; Snow et al. 2003; Zerubavel 2006).

Analogies between theories and data influence case selection. A case is chosen as a possible example of some phenomenon. The starting theory or concept is used heuristically, as a tool for sorting the data to identify both analogies and differences, the differences providing the grist for theoretical innovation. Regardless of level of analysis of the starting theory, the data are also sorted into micro-, meso-, and macro- categories to prevent exclusion of potentially relevant data. Additional theories and concepts are brought in as the data dictate. The result may confirm, refute, challenge, or elaborate the starting theory, which in its modified form, guides analysis of the next example. Additional cases are chosen to vary in size, complexity, and function, producing data at different levels of analysis. Thus, cross-case comparison successively elaborates an explanation that makes macro-meso-micro- connections. Like the other exemplars, this method is not theoretically neutral. It is influenced by developments in sociological

theory indicating that action is situated in layered structures, culture, and history, which affect interpretation, meaning, and action at the local level. Culture has emerged as a mediating mechanism between an individual's position in a structure and the micro-level. Meso-level structures – networks, neighborhoods, formal organizations, groups – act as mediating mechanisms between larger structures and actions, shaping cultural understandings to fit the local situation. Data sorting includes a search for all these factors, but not all will be relevant to a given case. Although not theoretically neutral, the principals of analogical theorizing are sufficiently neutral to be used by scholars working with the theoretical frames of the other exemplars discussed (see, e.g., Katz and Bourdieu) or with quantitative methods, as will be discussed in the conclusion.

Ethnographic Analytics, Analytical Sociology, and the Macro-Micro- Link

Comparing contemporary exemplars of analytic ethnography has been an inquiry into the production of knowledge. The comparison shows that analytic ethnography comes wrapped in very different packages. Each exemplar is driven by its author's theory of how society works, which in turn affects the unit of analysis, the level of analysis, and the explanation that the ethnographer produces. We should expect these differences. The explanation of each case is never formulaic, but necessarily crafted to the unique contours of the historic moment, the interaction, the setting, data availability, and researcher preferences. Because each ethnographer's process is ordered by some overarching theory or theories about how the world works, analytic ethnographers tend not to switch perspectives over their careers, but to accumulate a body of work within the same theoretical orientation. They become committed to a frame of reference, a way of seeing, which they continue to practice empirically.

Katz, an exemplar for phenomenology and symbolic interactionism, prioritizes the micro-level, locating the causes of social action in the immediate situation and the actor's emotional response to it. Atypical of the genre, his work develops formal theory. Becker/Strauss, Fine, and Latour all locate explanations at the intersection of micro- and meso-levels of analysis, although each has different interpretations of what the meso-level is and how it is to be examined. For Becker/Strauss and current social worlds

practitioners, meso-level is some socially organized collective activity, which could include both the social world and larger arenas of conflict in which individuals from one social world interact with representatives from others. For Fine and other small group researchers, the meso-level enters the analysis if the small group being studied is affected by organizational and occupational constraints. Interaction in the small group remains the focus of analysis, the meso-level structures indirectly observed in interaction. For Latour and actor-network theorists, the meso-level is networks. All three approaches are concerned with substantive theory rather than formal theory, although each has produced influential generalizable concepts.

Four exemplars examine the relation between macro-, meso-, and micro-levels of analysis. All are concerned with extra-local forces that impinge on local conditions, affecting individual actions and meanings. Although all are interested in how structures might be changed, most research shows reproduction, not change. The four types identify different mediating mechanisms between macro-structures and processes and micro-level action, however. For Burawoy and many (but not all) practitioners of the extended case method, the meso-level mediator is the workplace and the regime of production; for Smith and institutional ethnographers, documents, discourse, and texts conveying institutional ideologies in the form of schedules, plans, rules, and policies are the mediating mechanisms. For Bourdieu and Vaughan, the mediating mechanism is a subjective element. For Bourdieu, it is habitus; for Vaughan, it is cultural beliefs; for both, extra-local factors create subjectivities that materialize in a meso-level organizational form that shapes cognition and action to fit the local situation. The goal of Burawoy, Bourdieu, and Vaughan is formal theory, successively approximated as case follows case. Smith's interest is in substantive theory: over time, the many researchers practicing institutional ethnography will expose the similar patterns and effects of corporate capitalism, without seeking a formal theory per se.

With the varieties of analytic ethnography now in mind, we can clarify how it is similar to and different from analytical sociology in order to consider the problem of macro-micro linkages. Recall that analytical sociology is designed to escape the limits of variable analysis in quantitative sociology by examining key social processes and breaking them down into their primary components, showing how they work together to

produce social outcomes. Arriving at explanatory theory is the goal. Although operating on very different assumptions about human behavior and how to study it, analytical sociology and analytic ethnography have the foregoing characteristics in common. Providing plausible causal accounts of why things happen is a goal of both, despite internal disputes about the meaning of explanation. However, examining analytic ethnography in relation to analytical sociology's more specific principles affirms other similarities but illuminates the major differences, both of which are relevant to theoretical and empirical advances on the macro- micro relationship. Those principles are explanation, dissection and abstraction, precision and clarity, and action (Hedstrom 2005).

Explanation: The position of analytical sociology is that the best explanation for the social sciences is mechanism-based. Mechanisms are the “constellation of entities and activities, typically actors and their actions, that are linked to one another in such a way that they regularly bring about the type of phenomenon we seek to explain.” (2005: 2). The mechanisms of central interest are structures: e.g., networks, the constraints of informal rules or social norms, and aggregate desires, benefits, and structured opportunities of individuals. Analytical sociology rejects general laws and principles, theory, and concepts; for analytical sociology, mechanisms *are* the explanation.

Mechanisms also are the core concern of analytic ethnography. All varieties break down social processes into key components to see how they effect social outcomes. Explanation requires detailed description: the two go hand in hand (Katz 2001a, 2001b). Detailed description renders mechanisms observable. They may be situational, social psychological, structural or some combination, depending upon the variety of analytical ethnography practiced. Moreover, an object may be a mechanism: in social worlds analysis, the boundary object brings individuals and groups together, in actor-network theory, a mosquito, bacteria, laboratory, or theory, serves the same purpose. For some varieties of analytic ethnography (illustrated here by Fine, Becker/Strauss, Latour, Smith), the mechanisms of interaction constitute the explanation. Other ethnographers (illustrated here by Katz, Bourdieu, Burawoy, and Vaughan) agree, but then strive to move from the identification of mechanisms to the elaboration of formal theory, concepts, and developing general explanations across cases.

Dissection and Abstraction. For analytical sociology, the purpose of theorizing is to come up with an explanation that reveals how "...small and seemingly insignificant differences or events can sometimes make a huge difference to the processes we are trying to explain (2005: 4)." Dissection and abstraction are the tools for decomposing complex social processes in order to identify the mechanisms that drive social outcomes. Dissection isolates the constituent entities; abstraction selects from them those most essential to understanding the phenomenon of interest. Analytic ethnography relies upon the same sorting and sifting process to identify the mechanisms that produce social regularities. Close, careful attention to data and its accurate depiction of social life is the essence of explanation in analytic ethnography, which in practice combines craft and science. It is the complexity of detailed descriptive data, often unwieldy and difficult to sort into patterns, that makes dissection and abstraction essential tools for explanation. Abstraction, however, applies in a second way for those analytical ethnographers who are interested in generalizable explanations. After isolating the essential substantive elements, they abstract further from these substantive elements to build formal theory and concepts.

Precision and Clarity. For analytical sociology, achieving precision and clarity includes identifying details and conveying them through operational and conceptual definitions that can be easily grasped (Hedstrom (2005). Otherwise mechanisms remain obscure and explanation is not achieved; the relationship between one activity, event, or phenomenon and another will not be conveyed. For analytic ethnography, precision and clarity are obtained by 1) accurate description so that anomalies and regularities are clear, 2) using analytic induction, which requires adjusting explanation to take into account anomalies (Lindesmith 1947), and 3) constant comparison between theory and data (Glaser and Strauss 1967) in the individual case and in some instances, cross-case comparison also, depending on the researcher's theoretical inclination. The "small and seemingly insignificant" do not escape scrutiny using these practices because the small and seemingly insignificant constitute the data and expose the mechanisms that are the explanation. Operational definitions and conceptual definitions are integral to every analysis, although their centrality in the written analysis may vary. Depending upon which type of analytic ethnography is practiced, they may be used, singly, either to set up

the problem by defining the social setting conceptually and stating the theoretical and empirical boundaries for investigation, or to give conceptual definitions of concepts (e.g., “epistemic cultures,” “performativity,” “urban villages,” “idioculture,” “translation,” “codes of the street,” “normalization of deviance,” “symbolic boundaries”) in relation to their empirical referents, or to develop formal theory expressed in concepts joined in explanatory form. Alternatively, the three may be used in combination.

A Theory of Action. The stated goal of analytical sociology is not just achieving explanation, but achieving explanation that links macro- and micro-level phenomena. This requires a theory of action that explains what actors do. According to Hedstrom, analytical sociology is opposed to quantitative research that must make theoretical assumptions about what goes on (2005:3). Rather than assumptions about what happened, what did happen – identifying the mechanisms - is crucial to explanatory theory. Empirically, the focus is on the structures of interaction that are the outcome of individual interaction, not the interaction itself. Despite analytical sociology’s disavowal of assumptions, making the macro- micro- connection relies on a rational choice assumption that actions are endowed with meaning and intentionality. Because the focus is structures of interaction, analytical sociology differentiates itself from other rational choice based approaches; it is “structural individualism,” not methodological individualism (Hedstrom 2005:5, note 4; for a critique, see Abbott 1996). Explanation stays at the macro-level. About actors and actions, the question asked is “...why, acting as they do, they bring about the social outcomes that they do?” (2005: 5). Social outcomes are defined as changes in collective properties brought about by the structures of interaction. Often, social change is the outcome to be explained.

As the eight exemplars demonstrate, not all analytic ethnographers are committed to making macro-micro- connections. These differences have generated intense debates about what ethnography is and how to go about it (Anderson 2002, Browning 2006, Duneier 2002, 2004, 2006; Klinenberg 2004, 2006; Newman 2002; Wacquant 2002) However, these debates are not a sign of a debacle or weakness in the specialty. To the contrary, they are a sign of analytic ethnography’s strength. The different approaches have had a good result: an extensive body of research exists at all levels of analysis. The exemplars demonstrate how analytic ethnography bridges these layers, its varieties filling

in the intersection of social processes and structures at macro-, meso-, and micro- levels of analysis. Different theoretical orientations notwithstanding, actors, action, and interaction is the entry point into the social for all analytic ethnographers. Interaction is directly observed; the social context shapes what is perceived as rational at a given moment. For phenomenologists and symbolic interactionists, explanation resides in the immediate social situation; for others, micro-level observations are a window into larger structures of interaction, such as families, conventions, social worlds, networks, and formal and complex organizations. Further, ethnographers have linked these meso-level factors to larger structural forces, such as economic systems, history, culture, class, race, gender, and political systems. The relation between these layered structures is observed and traced in what people say and do in local situations,

This bridging ability of analytical ethnography is central to understanding how it differs from yet meshes with the goal of analytical sociology to bridge the distance between theories of macro-micro relations and research that does the same. There are obstacles, however. Consider first the lack of integration *within* both analytic ethnography and analytical sociology. Little effort has been put to accumulating results in a systematic way. Integrating macro-, meso-, and micro levels of the social has not been a common goal. This condition has structural origins. Although theory classes instruct on the integration of layered structures and processes, professional training does not give us the necessary research skills. We may be exposed in graduate education to both quantitative and qualitative methods, but the tendency is to specialize in either macro- or micro-methods, due to department specialty, mentor influence, personal capability and preference, and the desire to get a job in a discipline where specialization is rewarded. Research methods classes encourage mixed methods, but how to make empirical connections across levels of analysis is not typically taught, unless the department has analytical ethnographers training students in one of the four approaches that integrate micro-, meso-, and macro-level explanations. Many scholars have bridged the gap by framing micro-level projects in literature describing relevant macro-level factors or the reverse, but empirical demonstrations of the connection between the two are more rare and tend to be qualitative (in addition to those cited previously, see Willis 1977; Halle

1984; Kunda 1992; Bourgois 1995; Lamont 2000; Venkatesh 2000, 2005; Salzinger 2003; Newman 2004, Auyero 2005; Espiritu 2005; Sherman 2007).

In working toward theoretical integration and macro-micro connections, analogical theorizing has a role. A first step could be separate projects within analytical sociology and analytic ethnography to arrive at general principles at the same level of analysis. In analytical sociology, for example, cross-case comparison could show how the same mechanism (e.g., networks) operates across different substantive problems, or how different mechanisms are involved in producing the same (or similar) social outcomes. In analytic ethnography, integration within the same level of analysis could begin by using the cross-case strategy to abstract regularities and differences found on similar research problems within each research genre - phenomenology, small groups, actor-networks, Bourdieuan, social worlds, extended cases, etc. An obstacle specific to ethnography is that ethnographers work, often alone, on distinctive problems in unique settings that make finding generalities across projects difficult. Also, for many analytical sociologists and for analytic ethnographers, this integrative direction requires altering a commitment to substantive theory and thus how research is conducted. If achieving integration within each approach is complex and challenging, how then might we foresee a productive relationship between analytic ethnography and analytical sociology in making macro-micro connections?

Analytic ethnography cannot explain large scale social outcomes, as does analytical sociology, but it can make macro-, meso-, micro-level connections and has accumulated data at all levels of analysis. The strength of analytic ethnography is revealing the mechanisms *behind* the mechanisms that contribute to the macro-level change and stability that are the focus of analytical sociology. According to Hedstrom (2005), the central mechanisms of analytical sociology are networks, informal rules and social norms, and the desires, benefits, and structured opportunities of individuals. These all can be and have been studied by analytic ethnographers. Also, they have studied social movements, communities, social worlds, professions, neighborhoods, regimes of production, families, formal organizations, all of which are contributors to and affected by macro-level forces and outcomes. Exchange of ideas between analytic ethnography and analytical sociology to make macro-micro connections is possible because theory and

concepts developed from data at one level of analysis can be used heuristically to examine social relations at another (Vaughan 1992). This is so because all socially organized forms have structures and processes in common – division of labor, stratification, conflict, hierarchy, cooperation, socialization. Therefore, concepts and theories developed ethnographically could be tried in analytical sociology and vice versa, comparing different units of analysis. Network ties, e.g., can be examined using individuals, subunits within organizations, formal organizations, or nation states as the units of analysis. Thus, research on actor network theory holds hypotheses for macro-level research on networks and the reverse may be true.

Consider, as an example of how analogical theorizing might aid in making macro-micro- connections, the research of Podolny, Gambetta, and Vaughan, authors in this volume. All do research using economist Spence's (1974) signaling game theory, reconceptualizing it as a sociology of signals and signaling. All examine the use of signals in different social locations, make different assumptions, use different methods, and different levels of analysis. Uniformly however, and consistent with Spence, they treat signals as information, examining how decisions are made under conditions of uncertainty. Spence was interested in markets characterized by information asymmetries. How is information transferred in these markets? His lead example was of firms making hiring decisions under conditions of incomplete information gathering. His model included a decision maker and a pool of possibilities, product uncertainty, and high observation costs. Because of the number of candidates, employers are unable to thoroughly know each individual applicant. Though the information may be attainable, in most cases the employer is unwilling to conduct a thorough search because of cost. Instead, the employer uses a short cut method for screening applicants, relying on readily observable characteristics in order to make the decision. Two characteristics carry information: Signals are observable alterable characteristics, over which the applicant has some control, such as years of education; indices, on the other hand, are observable unalterable characteristics, such as race or sex. Signals can be changed by the actions of the applicant. In a competitive situation, applicants make adjustments (e.g., getting an advanced degree) that will make them appear more favorable to an employer. This activity is called "signaling".

Podolny (1993, 2005) conceptualizes status as a signal of quality and investigates market mechanisms for sustaining the status ordering in a market. He hypothesizes that rational consumers will rely on status as an indicator of quality in order to reduce their uncertainty in markets. Making rational choice assumptions and working at the macro-level, he examines status dynamics in industries, comparing investment banking, wine, shipping, venture capital and semiconductors (2005). One finding is that signals are inseparable from context: reputational information is situated in the pattern of ties among a group of actors. Another is that status “leaks” through exchange relationships. Bacharach and Gambetta (2001) reconceptualize signaling theory to analyze trust games. Using ethnography and interviews to understand how taxi drivers establish a customer’s trustworthiness, Gambetta and Hamill (2005) examines customers’ mimicry and falsification of signals and taxi drivers’ rational and nonrational reasoning (unfounded beliefs, unfounded stereotypes) in identifying and interpreting signals to resolve uncertainty about trustworthiness. He alters the rational choice assumption that incentives in the form of rewards and penalties motivate the customer; instead trustworthiness is the product of customer attributes conveyed to and interpreted by the taxi driver as signals. Costs figure into the trust game: reliability of a signal is based on calculating the cost of attaining it legitimately. Vaughan examined harmful outcomes preceded by long incubation periods in which early warning signs were either misinterpreted or ignored: fraud between two organizations (1983), deteriorating intimate relations (1986), and the NASA organization’s decision to launch Challenger (1996). Signals were a short-cut method of assessing risk and reducing uncertainty. Varying the unit and level of analysis, the cross-case comparisons showed the characteristics of signals, how they could be manipulated or neutralized, and how they were interpreted. Their interpretation was affected by the pattern of information (signals were mixed, weak, or routine), meso-level culture and structure, and extra-local factors. Within this complex context, all decisions appeared rational to decision makers when they were made (for the comparison, see Vaughan 2002).

These research projects, which use different methods, units, and levels of analysis, could be the basis of a cross-case comparison searching for analogies and differences, both empirically and theoretically. One goal could be identifying a tentative

general theory of signaling that merges levels of analysis. Another could be to discern what insights can be drawn from each project that enhance explanation at other levels of analysis. For example, how might Podolny's concept of leakage work at the micro-level? Intra-organizationally? What about mistake and unintended consequences at the macro-level? All three projects are either explicitly or implicitly about risk, so another possibility is incorporating the signaling research into a theory of risk that stands across substantive problems. Adding the longitudinal dimension to Podolny and Gambetta, what about mixed, weak, and routine signals, or the sequential interjection of new signals in a social context overtime? These are only a few of the possibilities. Most promising in the signaling example is that three sociologists independently read across disciplinary boundaries to discover and use an economic theory that helped explain their data. Although the structural obstacles described earlier suggest that ultimately bridging the gap between theories of macro-micro relations and research depends upon structural change in the discipline, the example suggests that crossing intra-disciplinary boundaries to bridge the macro-macro gap may be easier than imagined. Even if theoretical integration remains elusive, the exchange of ideas, theories, and concepts between analytic ethnography and analytical sociology could be productive.

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ⁱⁱ Glaser and Strauss proposed a system for theory generation that was inductive, grounded in data, and constant comparison between data and the developing theory in the individual case, then comparison between cases. The book was an exegesis of how to move toward general theory, based on scientific methods. Blumer criticized quantitative methods for its variables approach, suggesting that instead of deductive testing of concepts as operationalized, the strength of qualitative methods was its ability to use “sensitizing concepts” in a systematic way. The advantage was that sensitizing concepts tell you where to look but not what to find.