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ABSTRACT

Introducing the concept of phenomenology (concern with consciousness, objects of consciousness, possibilities, and a return to "things") supported by ethnomethodology as a viable approach to rural sociology, this paper presents: (1) a brief review of selected articles discussing the conceptualization of "rural"; (2) certain principles in the sociology of knowledge which have epistemological implications for both rural sociology method and substance; (3) a brief discussion on certain aspects of Husserl's and Schutz's phenomenology and Garfinkel's ethnomethodology as relative to rural sociology; and (4) rural schools as a case in point where analysis might be enriched via a sociology of knowledge-phenomenological-ethnomethodological approach concerning itself with "reality construction". Since ethnomethodology is concerned with the immediately observable social situation, a central concept posited is that ethnomethodology calls into question the normative organizational focus of rural sociology as exemplified in the study of social structure. Emphasizing the difference between objective and subjective reality, rural schools and reality construction are discussed in terms of reality differentials, transmission, and reaction and internalization. Essentially, this paper calls for a humanistic sociology; wherein, researchers open their eyes to the world with a "natural attitude" and perceive the world as an ongoing accomplishment rather than as a "taken for granted facticity". (JC)

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THE SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE AND CONTEXTUAL EFFECTS: REALITY CONSTRUCTION IN RURAL SCHOOLS*

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The Problem

Historically, sociologists (and rural sociologists in particular) have been much concerned with understanding social structure. Many of the Presidential addresses made to the Rural Sociological Society have had some structural referent (and, often, of course, a concern for rural sociology's future). It has been the organizational--vis-a-vis organizing--dimension of rural society that seems to have most interested those calling themselves "rural sociologists." This, by itself, is not necessarily bad except that it has led to a general acceptance of structural-functionalism (or, perhaps, systems theory for some) with its accompanying lack of real people. We can safely say that Homan's (1964) plea to "bring men back in" has been largely ignored in rural sociology. With all due respect to my rural sociology colleagues, we are very short on real people in our analyses but rather inundated by institutions, systems, sub-systems, and the like.

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As Homan's suggested, our jargon may have gotten the better of us to where we have reified some things for so long that they have acquired a "real" status.

Sooner than pursue a structural-systems approach (or, for that matter, a conflict one), in this paper I wish to introduce what I have surmised is a new approach to rural sociology. It is an approach that has received increasing attention in both British and American sociology but little (if any) attention in rural sociology. This approach is related to the sociology of knowledge and is best labelled as "phenomenological sociology" (Heap and Roth, 1973), with a supporting activity called "ethnomethodology" (Garfinkel, 1967).

I have four main goals in this paper: (1) to briefly review selected articles which have discussed the conceptualization of "rural." My aim here is to indicate just how consistently structurally-bound rural sociologists have been. (2) I wish to outline certain principles in the sociology of knowledge which have rather profound epistemological implications for both rural sociology's method and substance. (3) I will briefly discuss certain aspects of Husserl's and Schutz's phenomenology and Garfinkel's ethnomethodology and relate those to rural sociology. (4) Drawing heavily on Berger and Luckmann (1966), but with references to others as well, I will use the setting of rural schools as a case in point for where our analyses might be enriched by a sociology of knowledge-phenomenological-ethnomethodological approach concerning itself with "reality construction." Let me state here, I offer no <u>theory</u> of knowledge nor philosophical discourse into the

metaphysics of rural sociology--it is beyond my aim and ability to do either of these things. What I do offer is a radically different perspective for debate among rural sociologists. A perspective that might enable us to better understand the rural folk in whom we are interested.

Rural-Urban: Similar or Dissimilar?

When I first proposed this paper I thought that I would be able to blithely sail along to a discussion of rural schools, with little problem as to what I meant by "rural." However, in teaching a graduate rural sociology seminar this spring, it once again became apparent to me how poorly understood the concept "rural" is. Sooner than treat this conceptual problem in depth, I have chosen to cite relevant studies from the two major rural sociology journals (1) Rural Sociology and (2) Sociologia Ruralis. This gives us a shortened list but a good one nonetheless to assess how rural sociologists have dealt with a concept central to much of their work.

No one in recent years has evinced as much concern for good theory and conceptualization in rural sociology as has Bealer (1963; 1965; 1966; 1969; 1975). And among his concerns has been grappling with the concept of rural or "rurality" (Bealer, et al., 1965). While recognizing the need for conceptual clarity, the conclusion reached in 1965 (and, I must assume, still agreed upon today) was to not undertake "the impossible derivation of a definitive meaning for rural" (p. 266, emphasis given by me). In short, the concept rural is multifaceted and there will be no one conceptualization of it suitable for

all occasions (as will be seen shortly, my own conclusion is similar to this although for different reasons); its use is conditional. In addition to this conclusion, the Bealer, et al. article is important because it well illustrates rural sociology's penchant for structural-type variables, not only in its own analysis but in its citation of others as well. The three dominant orientations within the concept's use were summarized as ecological, occupational, and sociocultural (principally, values). The Bealer et al. article concluded by suggesting that a composite definition (of the three structural qualities) might have the most appeal. In a later work by Willits and Bealer (1967), which attempted to empirically evaluate a composite definition, they concluded that "the empirical utility...appears questionable based on our study" (p. 177). Thus the concept "rural" leaves us in much the same state as a concept like social class, or community, or perhaps alienation--we are quite certain that it is there, real people use it in ways that are meaningful to them, and yet it is damnably difficult to get social scientists to agree on exactly (in scientific terms) that to which the concept refers.

While all of the work cited by Bealer appears in Rural Sociology, it is equally insightful (or, some may say, not insightful) to examine selected articles in Sociologia Ruralis. In either case, much of the history of the conceptual debate has been grounded in two interrelated dichotomies--rural-urban and Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft.[1] The Toennies formulation of Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft led to a typological analysis, as though the two were opposing forces. At least from Dewey (1960) on, some sociologists have been warning other sociologists about the potential

problems of a rural-urban typology or continuum. In addition, as Pahl (1966) pointed out, there was the problem of reification wherein the continuum acquired as ontologically "real" status.

From its inception, Sociologia Ruralis has published articles examining the "rural-urban" confusion. Hofstee (1960) depicted an increasing trend toward a rational, Gesellschaft-type of social organization, but said little about the "rural" except that its organizational uniqueness (i.e., Gemeinschaft quality) was being subsumed by the move toward Gesellschaft society. Anderson (1963) has pointed out certain aspects (e.g., work, time, leisure) of what he sees as "different spheres" (p. 8). His argument is that each sphere is in some ways unique. Counter to these articles was the seminal article by Pahl (1966) who severly criticized the very idea of a rural-urban continuum and suggested, instead, that there were many continua and discontinuities both within and between rural and urban areas. For Pahl, groups and individuals were to be of central interest via such concepts as role, social networks, patron-client relationship, and local and national systems. He concluded that, "Any attempt to tie particular patterns of social relationships to specific geographical milieux is a singularly fruitless exercise" (p. 322). A later exchange between Pahl (1967) and a critic (Lupri, 1967) again leaves one uncertain as to exactly how useful making sharp rural-urban contrasts may be. And if they are to be made, one is equally uncertain as to the best approach to take. Thus questions of both substance and method are at issue in any appraisal of something which many rural sociologists are

convinced is there--if there is no "rural," can there be a rural sociology?

In summary, if Bealer et al. are correct (and there seems to be little reason to doubt them although their article was published a decade ago), the vast majority of conceptualizations of "rural" have had structural epistemologies. This is so not only in its adherence to such indicators of the concept as ecological, occupational and sociocultural qualities. The force of the impression is even greater when we consider the phrases Bealer et al. use in concluding that a "solely sociocultural definition" would be unsuitable. These phrases include reasoning such as "administrative and professional pressures," that there might be "serious problems in obtaining support from traditional sources where interests center on a commercial farmer" (emphasis mine) and "the historical position of rural sociology [in the U.S.A.] in the land-grant university could be altered from a relatively infependent department in the school of agriculture to a speciality within sociology" (p. 266). From the Kuhnian (1970) perspective, it does not take tremendous insight for a sociologist of science to see a certain ideologically-tainted epistemological position apparent here, even in so seemingly apolitical a task as conceptualizing. While Pahl's article gives some hope for a less structural approach (especially in reference to Goffman), the argument that we have been less than imaginative in our conceptualizing "rural" seems more compelling than not.

A Glance at the Sociology of Knowledge

As implied above, the sociology of knowledge may have much to tell us about why we have conceptualized "rural" as we have (or, as the case may be, have not). Additionally, it may help us if we are to continue to search for what is meant by "rural." It is to the sociology of knowledge, albeit briefly, that we now turn.

For sociologists, a good starting point in the sociology of knowledge is Marx, Durkheim and Weber. Marx because of his notion that "man's consciousness is determined by his social being" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966:5-6). Durkheim because of his stress on social facts, his society sui generis, and his work on religion which laid a framework for an elemental sociology of knowledge wherein religion was conceived of as a social construction which influenced thought. And Weber because of his insistence on subjective meanings and on interpretative sociology. All three men were cognizant of knowledge as a social product not only in its social fact status but in its very internalization through consciousness and thought and as manifested in ideation.

Analytically, we raise two assertions here: first, it is possible to seek some understanding of man's consciousness of things quite independent of any and all social conditions. It matters not how he came to think as he does. What matters, first and foremost, is (a) that he thinks, cognates, has consciousness of something (i.e., his consciousness has intentionality) and that that "some thing" is of interest to the analyst and (b) that it is possible to discover how he--as

actor--conceptualizes that about which he thinks. What this portends then is some ability to deal with a sociology of language as part of a sociology of knowledge so that the analyst can "understand" (in the Weberian sense of verstehende) what the actor thinks about a particular thing or object in what wyy the object has meaning for him.

Second, it is possible--having delved into (a) and (b)--to understand how the individual has come to think as he has. While the first assertion may be criticized on the grounds of being too phenomenologically reductionistic (i.e., raising questions of individual, subjectively appraised consciousness and the essences of things gotten there from), the second assertion is certainly more in line with traditional sociological thought in its possibility for affiliation with a structural basis. In either case, hermeneutics is of concern since each has methological premises attendant to it. In the first assertion, one sees the argument for a rather anti-positivistic (although not necessarily anti-scientific) sociology concerning itself with the individual's "understanding" and especially as this is grounded (or more symbolically appropriate, "played out") in the everyday world. In the second assertion, the question asked is fundamentally different--it asks how structure influences the individual's thought, his cognition about certain objects. This latter instance is more like the sociology of knowledge discussed by Mannheim (1960) and Merton (1968). It is here that the social structure is given greater importance.

My plea is not for a sociology of knowledge which aspires to finding truth (or truths), as Stark (1958) and Scheler (1970) have

suggested, but, more fundamentally, for an understanding of what people accept as "known" and which for them acquires a quality which we can call "taken-for-grantedness." In short, my sociology of knowledge is more interested in whatever it is that people are willing to accept into their own "organizing frameworks" (versus "organizational") and which they take as real insofar as it makes their social lives meaningful for them. This is obviously, then, a situational sociology of knowledge concerned with both the actor's conception of reality and the influence of trans-actor considerations on this conception. I say "trans-actor" because I do not mean to include only such sui generis things as societies; rather, I mean to include, at a more fundamental level of analysis and abstraction, those relationships which lend themselves to intersubjectivity whereby at least two actors are in agreement about either reality entoto or some "slice of reality" (Schutz, 1970).

My sociology of knowledge, then, is much like that of Berger and Luckmann (1966); "The sociology of knowledge is concerned with the analysis of the social construction of reality" (p. 3). Again drawing on Berger and Luckmann, I define "reality" as phenomena that have "a being independent of our own volition" (we cannot 'wish them away') and...'Knowledge' as the certainty that phenomena are real and that they possess specific characteristics" (p. 1).[2] This sociology of knowledge is most concerned with commonsense knowledge because it is here that we may come closest to understanding meanings as they are intersubjectively constituted. And as should be apparent by now, all

of these are esconced in a theoretic framework which has as its principle canon a situational determinate. Thus what is accepted as "reality" and "knowledge" will be dependent on varying social contexts. The ideas from Schutz (1970) of a "seat in life" (Sitz im Leben) and a "life-world" (Lebenswelt), as well as W. I. Thomas' (1968) "definition of the situation," are included and there is a large debt owed to Mead (1934).

But what, you might well ask, does this mean for rural sociology? For me, it means a radical shift in focus. If one accepts the premise of a socially constructed world, then rural sociologists may engage in analyses of their discipline as a social construct and their own perspectives as influencing and having been influenced by the discipline's structure. In short, we may appraise the objective nature of the discipline (the structure; what seems to exist independent of us "out there") as well as its subjective side (what we have internalized and individually understand it to be). Furthermore, if we clearly understand what this bodes for us, it will enable us to be cognizant of our life situations and how this influences our concepts. It may also free us to more imaginatively wrestle with just such a concept as "rural" appears to have been; to date, my own scorecard has the concept winning all falls.

So far as I can ascertain, there is no good reason why rural sociologists have been so enamored with the structural model. Is it because of the deep insights it gives us into rural life, especially as that life is lived by rural people? But a further question remains: Who are these people on whom a rural sociology depends? To that, in a moment.

Phenomenological Sociology and Ethnomethodology: Helpful or Helpless?

A phenomenologist friend of mine recently told me that in his brief excursion into rural sociology writings he was struck by how little the writings conveyed what it is like to live in a rural area. His comment went something like this: "If you visited a rural area or met some rural people, you would never recognize them from what rural sociologists have said about them."[3] (This may be much like Einstein's comment about a scientist's description of the soup still not allowing one to experience the soup's flavor.) While the same could no doubt be said about urban sociologists and urban folk, his comment illustrates something we have all dealt with. If one uses a U.S. census definition of rural, it does not take long to visit places with more than 2,500 residents (in many instances, places of far more than 2,500) which certainly seem different from New York City. An agricultural definition is similarly problematic, especially with part-time farmers and agricultural workers, although the presence of farmland indicates a shift to a more non-ashphat world. Even more problematic is a sociocultural definition since we can quickly--usually in our own experiences--recall people in urban settings who seemed awfully provincial in their Weltenschauugen. Thus we are right where we started--what is meant by "rural"?

In recent years, sociology has undergone the pangs of a sociology of sociology (Friedrichs, 1970; Gouldner, 1970) which has resulted in numerous catalogs of its many paradigms (Ritzer, 1975; Turner, 1974). Among the newer of these paradigms has been phenomenological sociology

and ethnomethodology (which some, knowingly, may choose to call anethmamethodology). If they are understood, both may have something to say to rural sociology.

Phenomenology is concerned with consciousness, objects of consciousness, possibilities, and in general meanings (Nyberg, 1974). Much of this, stemming from Husserl, is tied to an awareness of essences. As Lauer has pointed out (and in support of our notion of a situated reality):

> Phenomenology is conceived of as a return to 'things'... The color 'red' is no less a thing than is a horse, since each has an 'essence' which is entirely independent of any concrete, contingent existence it may have... In this sense an imaginary object has its distinct essence just as truly as does a 'real' object. Whether an object is real or fictitious can be determined by an analysis of the act of which it is an object (Lauer, 1965:9).

In science, phenomenology addresses itself to the "what" of our scientific concepts; it becomes the foundation of scientific "knowledge." For Husserl, "there can be nothing which cannot be known 'phenomenologically' (to think 'it,' to conceive 'it,' is to constitute 'it' as phenomena and thereby to leave it within the realm of phenomenology)..." (Nyberg, 1974:7). Husserl used the epoche to eliminate "...any position of factual existence" (Lauer, p. 49), to suspend or bracket cognitive concern about reality. "The suspension of doubt or disbelief functions for the phenomenologist as does a vacuum for the physicist, in that all elements not of the phenomena under examination are 'sealed off' from the phenomena" (Nyberg, p. 10).

Methodologically, Husserl calls for a series of psychological reductions to make possible the apprehension of intentional consciousness

whereby the subject is constituted as subject. This makes understandable the concern with objects of consciousness, consciousness itself, and possibilities because the corresponding verb tenses would be past, present, and future--or, put differently, things that have been, are presently, and may be. As Hamilton has stated, in his discussion of phenomenology:

> ...if social reality is constructed by men's consciousness, then its nature can only be studied reflexively, by acts of pure reflection (the 'phenomenological reduction'): any attempt to apply natural scientific methods of objective research or experimentation to the study of social reality are in these terms fundamentally erroneous... For our knowledge of social and natural reality is in fact identical with that reality: as our knowledge changes so also changes the reality that it constitutes (Hamilton, 1974:137).

If we depict Husserl as the founding father, here, then Schutz was certainly a leading disciple and one who made phenomenology more sociological. Schutz (1967; 1970) extended Max Weber both substantively (with the concept of action) and methodologically (with the ideal type and discussion of verstehende). His approach bordered closely on an abstract symbolic interaction with focus on the structures of the life-world, typifications, others, and intersubjectivity. Our knowledge of others was to be validated in the face-to-face situation (Douglas, 1971:51). As Heap and Roth (1973) observe, much of Berger and Luckmann's (1966) work is akin to Schutz's phenomenology, hence its relevance in this paper.

Sooner than take this any further, let me stop here. Suffice it to say that this is difficult "stuff" but provocative in its possibility for orienting us toward another view of the world; akin to Castenada's

(1968) "extra-ordinary reality," phenomenology may offer us a world view which we have thus far not seen. What this portends for a reflexive rural sociology is a perspective within which we may access a new world. It may not entail an "alternation" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966:157-61) but then again it might. As I have stated earlier, if given serious consideration, the impact may be sufficient to cause rural sociologists to re-examine their claim to a scientific metaphysics and the epistemological implications therein. At a minimum, it should help rural sociology in pursuing the elusive meaning of "rural"; after all, "rural" is simply a symbolic shorthand reflected by a "logic-in-use" (Kaplan, 1964). We give meaning to it in our daily use of it--it has a commonsense, everyday life quality when we use it in a taken-for-granted manner (Polanyi, 1958). Its meaning may be typified differently in different situations--e.g., in lay versus scientific usage. It is intersubjectively understood, given meaning, and used in typified ways and therefore should be amenable to <u>verstehende</u> analysis from the variously typified actors' (i.e., rural sociologists) points of view.

While phenomenology has a strong anti-positivistic bent, ethnomethodology at least would appear to be more empirically possible. As Heap and Roth (1973) point out, whereas phenomenology focuses on meaning in immediate consciousness, ethnomethodology is more concerned with "the immediately present, directly observable social situation" (p. 364), the situated practice which produces for the actors and others "the sense of objective social structures" (p. 364). While most sociologists would agree that meaning is important, "ethnosociologists try to analyze

just how people go about finding a meaning in their mutual actions; doing interpretation, i.e., the procedure of understanding the other, is the phenomenon under investigation" (Dreitzel, 1970:xi). Again, this necessitates a rather different focus for mainstream sociology and its practitioners.

Although Garfinkel (1967) and Cicourel (1964) have been the chief proponents of ethnomethodology, Wilson (1970) has contrasted the ethno-interpretive paradigm with the normative paradigm. It is the normative paradigm's (wherein, I would assert, the bulk of rural sociology falls) assumption of stable, shared symbols and meanings that is called into question by the interpretive paradigm. For the interpretive paradigm,[4] every role or behavior is taken as problematic for the actor and other since the rules for behavior are continually called into question. Cicourel's (1970) discussion of this is well taken for academics by his example of the first-year college professor who must negotiate his status and role with such varied others as clerical staff, students, and faculty colleagues: to some he is a consequential figure (by deference, "Dr."), but to others he is less consequential (hence, on a first-name basis perhaps) while his own reactions to others may range from deferential Mr., Mrs. (Ms.), first-name basis, to a deference toward certain colleagues leading to the use of honorifics like "Professor." As Dreitzel says, "Thus out of a mutual process of defining and redefining the relevant or 'meaningful' elements of situations, something like a social structure, however unstable, gradually emerges" (1970:xii).

What ethnomethodology has to say to rural sociology is that the focus on the normative, the organizational, may be insufficient. Even if we could know the normative typifications (situational or situated norms), we still would not understand their problematic aspect and how people, through interaction, construct frameworks within which certain rules of behavior evolve and are adhered to by the actors. But it is awareness and understanding of this kind of process that indicates just how frail what we call "social structure" is. In statistical terms, social structure is akin to the mean of the means with no examination of the variability; it is the norms themselves which are of interest and any variation is subsumed under "deviance." As Emerson (1970) has shown, to sustain the normative definition of things requires a good deal of work on everyone's part and some degree of variability is often found.

As Garfinkel (1967) would direct his students to question those who ask them "How are you?" so might we question those who claim to say "I am a rural sociologist." What is meant by the statement? "I am a rural sociologist" indicates identity, whereas "I do rural sociology" indicates activity. Assuming that an explanation is at hand for "sociology," the only problem is defining 'rural.' In either case a pattern of rules will be involved for both scientific exchange as well as generally communicative behavior. This is indicative of a kind of rational/non-rational or contemplated/taken-for-granted schism. We use the concept rural and its meaning is situated; unfortunately, I'm not at all certain that we know what our rural clientele has in mind when they use it. An

interpretive paradigm would at least address itself to this aspect of the conceptual dilemma. In what contexts do rural people use the concept? Do they refer to themselves as "rural"? Are their meanings invariant within contexts or is there divergence here as well? Do they use it in an areal context or is it more abstractly used to refer to some invisible community's Weltenschauugn (like Crane's (1972) "invisible colleges")?

Reality Construction in Rural Schools

In recent years there has emerged within sociology a debate around "contextual effects" (Alexander and Eckland, 1973). Those arguing for contextual effects assert that in such places as schools there is a trans-individual environment which influences individual behavior (Alexander and Eckland, 1974; Boyle, 1966; Carin and Weisman, 1972; St. John, 1970); at issue is what Wilson (1959) has called "normative climates." This thesis is much like Durkheim's "social facts" with an external, coercive quality. The critics of this (reviewed in Alexander and Eckland, 1973) contend that this "effect" is spurious and the result of such factors as social class, school size, etc.; in short, if these other things are controlled, the 'effect' will disappear. Little has been said about the specific social interaction involved in this although McPartland (1968) and Crain and Weisman (1972) have discussed it for racially desegregated schools.

Since Berger and Luckmann (1966) posit society (and other less inclusive social arrangements as is apparent in Berger and Kellner [1970]) as both objective and subjective reality, the person's conception of

the school, and his place in it, assumes a dialectic quality. On the one hand, the school exists as an objective, external facticity which the individual encounters daily. It's realness is beyond question. "The reality of every day life is taken for granted as reality... It is simply there, as self-evident and compelling facticity. I know that it is real" (Berger and Luckmann, p. 23; emphasis their's). In general there is an ongoing correspondence between your meanings and mine--we share in this commonsensical view.

The key to understanding objective reality lies in institutionalization and legitimation. Institutionalization is important because it entails an analysis of significant others, knowledge, language, roles, and the scope of institutionalization. Institutionalization is made possible because as people interact over time, their acts become patterned ("habitualized typification") and predictable ("reciprocal"): "Institutionalization occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors" (Berger and Luckmann, 54). Much as in Schutz's typification, it is not just the actions that are typified but the actors as well. And once these habitualized acts and actors have a history, once they are passed on to a new generation (as from parent to child), they come to possess "a reality of their own, a reality that confronts the individual as an external and coercive fact" (Berger and Luckmann, p. 58). What was once conceived of as a world now becomes the world. Thus man produces a world that he then experiences. The process by which this is all possible is threefold: first, these humanly produced products because they are externalized,

they come to be transcend the individual and exist "out there." Second, these externalized products come to be seen as having their own objectivity, they have a real quality to them. Third, the objectivated social world is implanted in the individual's consciousness via socialization. This has crucial importance for a sociology of knowledge because

> What is taken for granted as knowledge in the society (or parts, therein) comes to be coextensive with the knowable... Knowledge about society is thus a realization in the double sense of the word, in the sense of apprehending the objectivated social reality, and in the sense of ongoingly producing the reality (Berger and Luckmann, p. 67).

This eventuates in a commonly understood "social stock of knowledge" that includes all we take as known.

Legitimation occurs at various levels and serves "to make objectively available and subjectively plausible the 'first order' objectivations that have been institutionalized" (Berger and Luckmann, p. 93). Its most important level here is the "symbolic universe," for it is at this level of abstraction that "a whole world is created" (p. 96). It is within this that the history of the society and the individual's biography takes place. It is this that gives overarching "sense" to the world; it makes plausible the meanings and order of the world which we experience.

But all of this deals with an objective reality. Its counterpart, a subjective reality, is most important for one reason--its heavy emphasis on primary and secondary socialization. For it is socialization by which the externalized, objective reality is internalized by the individual. Primary socialization serves to give concreteness to an

otherwise chaotic world. It "may be seen as the most important confidence trick that society plays on the individual--to make appear as necessity [i.e., prescribed behaviors] what is in fact a bundle of contingencies, and thus to make meaningful the accident of his birth" (Berger and Luckmann, p. 135). And it is this type of stable concreteness that is called into question by ethnomethodologists, for whom virtually all behavior is an "accomplished act," not a presupposed, invariant phenomenon.

Now, three questions appear as relevant for the very idea of a reality construction in rural schools. (1) Is the reality (or, the symbolic universe) somehow different in rural schools than in non-rural schools? (2) Is the reality constructed or transmitted differently in rural schools? (3) Is the reality reacted to and internalized differently in rural schools? My answers to questions (2) and (3) are largely "no." The process of construction and transmission (at least in part described above) should be similar across all social situations which exist over time--an objective world is externalized and apprehended by the individual and made meaningful as it is internalized. One's reaction to and internalization of the construct should likewise be similar across situations. In both cases (2) and (3), significant and generalized others are involved for all individuals. But there is a pronounced possibility for variation within and between rural schools (or, non-rural schools) due to such things as frequency, intensity and duration of contact with these "others." Yet even here we have the potential for a better understanding of this "reality" if we focus on

the "habitualized reciprocal typifications of actions and actors" discussed by Berger and Luckmann. Thus types of actions and types of actors would be amenable to our analyses and help us to better apprehend the individual "life worlds" and shared symbolic universe to be found in the school setting.

The analysis suggested here allows us to pursue traditional sociological areas of inquiry but with greater depth and breadth. While there is nothing especially radical about an interest in norms, socialization, and the role of institutionalized forms of behavior, there is something unique in addressing all of this as problematic--as something which must be negotiated and made sensible through interaction. And it is out of this kind of focus that we are led to a more direct tie with traditional rural sociology because from this we may develop a new awareness of the etiology and importance of social structures. It is, after all, this notion of a structure which is involved in a symbolic universe. When we discuss roles (e.g., in Bertrand, 1968; and Pahl, 1966), we may do so with reference to a secondary socialization--a less personal, more self-detached process by which we access a plurality of worlds (e.g., in one's occupation, in one's fraternal organizations, etc.) but which may not be as stable as we often assume. But as we experience these variant processes

> There will be an increasingly general consciousness of the relativity of all worlds, including one's own, which is now subjectively apprehended as 'a world,' rather than 'the world'... [When we play at our different roles] such as situation cannot be understood unless it is ongoingly related to its social-structural context, which follows logically from the necessary relationship between the social division of labor (with its consequences for social structure) and the social distribution of knowledge (with its consequences for the social objectivation of reality) (Berger and Luckmann, pp. 172-73).

The only thing still to be addressed is if the reality in rural schools is somehow different than that in non-rural schools. It is this point that raises the issue of contextual effects because it allows for the possibility of different life-worlds and Weltenschauugen; it means that a somewhat different symbolic universe may be apprehended in differently constituted social realms. In other words, you may encounter a world view in a rural school unlike (in at least some respects) the world view in non-rural schools. While much of this may be bound-up in notions of social class and a stratification system with accompanying ideological overtones, there is still the possibility of a residue--an effect which occurs partly as a result of but has independence from other considerations. In sum, there may be an effect which transcends the "here and now" and serves as an influence on affected individuals.

This is not so far-fetched as it may seem at first blush. Afterall, we know that there are some rural/non-rural differences in values, occupations, and areal distributions, no matter how slight the differences. But at this point in history we are restricted in what we "know" by the approach we have taken to our subject matter. My point is that the reality of rural areas and rural schools might be more apparent if viewed from another perspective. If this thesis is borne out, then the definitional problem of "rural" will be closer to resolution because the uniqueness of "rural reality" will be more apparent. If this direction is followed, the man-land relationships, the man-nature-universe (cosmos) relationships, in short the man-given and man-made aspects of

rural reality may be more understood, hence easier to comparatively analyze with non-rural reality. And if this were to eventuate, the knowing of what is there as "rural" would make an analysis of reality construction in "rural schools" feasible. While some may argue that they are "schools" first and "rural schools" only as an afterthought, the question of their constituted realness and man-made structure bears investigation.

Conclusions

This paper may be chastized on numerous grounds--principal among them being that "rural schools" were given very short shift. My defense for the paper, as written, is based on two premises, which amounted to the themes of the paper. First, my own awareness of the literature on the concept "rural" leads me to conclude that the concept, although widely-used and somewhat understood, is poorly understood for the purpose of "normal science" (Kuhn, 1970). Second, and for me more importantly, our approach to such a crucial concept as "rural" would appear to be indicative of just how influential a dominant paradigm can be. If one hopes for a "humanistic sociology" (Lee, 1973), we must open our eyes to the world with a "natural attitude" whereby we will see the world as an ongoing accomplishment rather than as a taken for granted facticity. To understand the reality of rural schools we must understand "rural" since our supposition (or, usually, presupposition) is that those attending rural schools are, themselves, rural.

Mills' (1959) called for a sociological practice that was guided by a "sociological imagination," cognizant of man's biography with

history. My argument in this paper has been for a similar focus utilizing a more qualitative methodology influenced by phenomenology and ethnomethodology, or at a minimum symbolic interaction. Some may feel about this paper like many of those felt who read Pirsig's (1974), Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance. Just as his book had little on either 'zen' or 'motorcycle maintenance,' this paper had little on 'rural schools.' It is a question of values and, for me, the value in this paper had less to do with rural schools than with a quality which may pertain to them. If we are to understand that quality, many more papers such as this will be necessary.

FOOTNOTES

[1]I recognize that this could also include other well-known polarities like sacred-secular, traditional-modern, etc. It seems safe to say that it is the Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft construct that was most influential.

[2]It is far beyond my intent here to go any further with these concepts. Mannheim (1936), Merton (1968), Gurvitch (1971), Stark (1958), and Phillips (1975) provide more extended statements on all of these; an especially good, and very recent source, is Hamilton (1974).

[3]If he will pardon my bastardization here, this is attributable to my good friend Dr. Kenneth Nyberg, on whose paper, cited above, I have drawn heavily in this section.

[4]It must be acknowledged here that Benvenuti et al. (1975) and more directly Redclift (1975) have also argued for an interpretive or "interpretative" approach in rural sociology. Munters (1972) article on Weber as "rural sociologist," although discussing his comparative sociology with a rural focus, never indicated the possibility for Weber's emphasis on meaning, the actor, and verstehende; this may have been due to its concern with Weber's specific "rural" writings.

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