

The Self and Instrumental Model in the Study of Culture Change and Modernization

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Our purpose is to present a model of relations between individuals and their semantic environment that we have found useful in the study of adaptation to culture change and to see how it may relate to notions of self as phrased in recent discussions by anthropologists.¹

The original phrasing of this model was cognitive, in keeping with the interests surging to the fore in the mid-sixties (G. and L. Spindler 1965). Tired of the ambiguities and problematic aspects of the Rorschach, we wanted something quicker than life history, and even quicker than Louise's Expressive Autobiographic Interview, which could be applied to a large sample. We wanted to find out how individuals perceived the conditions, pitfalls and opportunities of their life environment and how they rationalized these perceptions. We developed the instrumental model and the Instrumental Activities Inventory and applied them in our field work with the Blood (or Kanai) of Alberta, Canada; the Mistassini Cree of Quebec, and the Germans of the Remstal, a valley southeast of Stuttgart (G. Spindler 1973).

The base idea of the instrumental model is that individuals choose "activities" that are instrumentally linked to complexes of life styles. These linkages work for people in predictable ways under conditions of relative stability, and they retain control over them unless there is a disturbance in the individual or in the setting. They become more unpredictable and more difficult to control under conditions of change. We were interested in the coping strategies which people use to handle conflicted environments. Our view has always been that people are not passive recipients of culture, even under conditions of relative stability and cultural uniformity. They are active in the construction of their lives and the construction of their selves. The choices may operate at more than one level of consciousness, particularly in a culture such as that of the traditional Menominee, where most choices of action are believed to be defined by dreams. Nevertheless, the individual is actively shaping choice.

The Instrumental Activities Inventory (IAI) consists of some thirty line drawings of significant activities in which a person may engage or conceive of engaging in. These drawings are of occupations, houses, social situations, clothes, recreation, and objects. For our purposes they are clustered around two poles--the traditional way of life and a modern, increasingly urbanized way of life. The activities, the line drawings, and the conception of what is traditional and modern must be refit, of course, to each research site. The technique is emic in its evocative stimuli, but the underlying model or theory of relations remains constant. Respondents are asked to choose activities they would like to engage in, which means choosing certain line drawings, and to explain why they choose them. The drawings may be selected by the individual from the whole pile of drawings, as the Blood insisted on doing, or presented one by one in any predetermined order. Alternatively, the

pictures may be presented in pre-selected pairs to groups of some size with two slide projectors, as we did in the Remstal with school children, their parents, and their teachers. The respondent makes choices, then defends the choices, either in writing for groups or orally under conditions of individual administration.

We are well aware of the antagonism felt by anthropologists towards any instrument placed between them and their informants. We have risked excommunication by insisting that, for certain purposes, the exercise of some control over evocative stimuli (and interviews are evocative stimuli) and the collection of a large sample of responses requiring statistical treatment, are useful. The IAI is not a substitute for ethnography, but is meant to accompany it. Further, the IAI is not imported from the outside as are the Rorschach and the TAT. It is made of native materials, even to the extent, when possible, of having the pictures drawn by a native artist.

We conceived of the responses, which are the choices of activities and their rationalization, as cognitive data, although we recognized the role of motivations, which are energized emotionally in the assignment of priorities of choice and supporting values.

From Here to the Self

The first attempt, in our research, to apply the concept of self in the analysis of data, was by Louise in her study of Menominee women, published in an American Anthropological Association memoir in 1962. In this analysis she inferred the self concept of the Menominee women in the four acculturative categories we had developed, utilizing social interaction, life histories, and the Rorschach, with a George Herbert Meadian theoretical underlay. There was a close interdependence among all the variables in the constitution of the self and a strong association with the acculturative categories. This pioneering attempt has largely been lost in the current flurry of excitement over the rediscovery of the self.

The IAI elicits data that seem relevant to concepts of self and personhood. We might say that we become what we choose as instrumentalities. The advertising professionals recognized this long ago, and we are now bombarded with invitations to identify with the sophisticated by drinking Perrier, and to become a member of the "now generation" by drinking diet Pepsi.

The IAI applied to the Blood Indians produced responses descriptive of a certain kind of person: one who demonstrated autonomy, valued activity and health, was concerned with physical appearance, wanted to keep the Blood identity, exhibited a low tendency toward stereotypic thinking, and was literal and practical (G. and L. Spindler 1965).

In retrospect it seems that we lumped together two major categories of response, one referent to a concept of cognitive style, and the other referent to a concept of self. These two categories are not separate in the thinking, feeling and behaving Blood, however. The Blood who does not apply stereotypes in his estimates of others' behaviour is at the same time autonomous, active, literal-minded, practical and identity-proud. His mind is not separate from his self. We are reminded of how our interpretations render behavior and people into components dictated by our theories, and how these theories provide new labels for old phenomena.

There is more to the current flurry of excitement over the self than the issuing of new labels, but we cannot help but comment that in the early 1950's we would have been quite satisfied to put it all together under either one of two master categories: basic personality or world view. But "personality" suggests a fixed, inner, individual entity and "world view" seems too all-encompassing. "Self" and "Person" seem useful concepts, particularly given our greater attention to context and meaning.

Sex Differences

Now it is time to break the news that the Blood IAI responses we have discussed are from male protocols. Females in our sample were also autonomous, literal and active, but clearly less so, and more importantly, females chose instrumental activities much more frequently oriented to the world outside the existent Blood community. This male/female difference is consistently displayed in all three of the relevant samples: Blood, Cree, and in the 1968 example from the Remstal. Whether our theory dictates that we are dealing with personalities, world view, perceptual structuring, cognitive processing, identities, or selves (and all seem to fit), we are sure that women in these three samples chose instrumentalities that are external to their communities-- away from home, more modern, more urbanized than the present situation significantly (in a statistical sense) more frequently than men did (G. and L. Spindler 1979).

The Remstal Study

We now turn our attention exclusively to the Remstal study and particularly to IAI responses collected from one community, Schoenhausen. We have carried on a long-term study of the elementary school and its community, with field visits in 1968, 1977, 1981 and 1985. In the last trip we carried out reflective cross-cultural interviewing using films from a similar American situation in which we have worked recently (1983-84), so that our respondents could do cultural translations for us and defamiliarize our German and American cases through this cross-cultural juxtaposition.² This paper will not discuss this research, however, but will focus on the results of the IAI profiles.

The instrumental choices for both sexes and all ages in our 1968 sample clustered around two poles: pragmatic and ideal romantic. The ideal-romantic pole is represented in choices of the *Weingärtner* (vintner) profession, *Selbständiger* (the independent small shop owner), the *Kleinbauer* (small farmer), the *Grossbauer* (big farmer), the quiet evening at home, and the *Weinlese* (grape harvest). Images and values constituting an idealized life style were woven together: the friendly village, kin, family, land and nature, fresh air and sunshine, history, beauty, independence, fresh natural food, freedom and health. This cluster was represented in every IAI protocol, even when instrumental choices of a more pragmatic orientation were expressed.

The pragmatic lifestyle centered around choices of the modern row house, white collar work, factory jobs, the machinist and technical draftsman trades, the modern church, the modern Bauernhaus, the evening out in a festive pub. It was constructed of a cluster of quite different images and values: physical comfort, convenience, shopping, access to entertainment and medical care, regular income, paid vacations, less hardship, and clean work.

The pragmatic cluster, representing an urbanized, modern lifestyle, was chosen more frequently by older respondents and by females than by younger respondents and males in the 1968 sample (G. Spindler 1974). The direction of female preferences was essentially the same as for the Blood and Cree samples.

As we interpreted these results in an analysis of the 1968 Remstal sample we saw the cognitive management of the opposing traditional versus urban-modern ways of life as the primary task that children learned in the school and that teachers and parents taught. We did use the term "identity" because it was apparent that there was an emotional component, an identification with certain instrumentalities in the statements supporting choices and in the way people behaved and talked as we observed and interviewed them in our ethnographic work. In 1973 we published a case study with the subtitle *Urbanization and Identity in a German Village* (G. Spindler 1973).

It seems to us that the ideal-romantic cluster is a type of enduring collective self: as Hallowell conceived of it, a personal continuity in experience, meaning and social identity, and with LeVine (who sees the self as ego-syntonic), an integrating principle of the personality phenotype (Hallowell 1955; LeVine 1984). The two constructs stress different characteristics but have in common an enduring quality that transcends situational adaptations.

The pragmatic cluster we interpret as essentially situational. We can think of it as representing a situated self, as in Dorinne Kondo's work on the self in the workplace (Kondo 1987). We can also describe the pragmatic cluster as representing a *person in context*. Whatever we call it, it is a pragmatic adaptation to the exigencies of life in an urbanizing, industrializing, modernizing environment, in the Remstal context. Our reading of analyses by others of their non-Western, certainly not urban or modern contexts, suggests that the situated or pragmatic self is usually cross-culturally recognizable, but that the enduring or romantic-ideal self may not be.

The problem of the individual Remstaler is to manage these two clusters in daily life and fantasy. Seeing this process as cognitive leads one to cool interpretations. Seeing it as a management of conflicting self images leads one to hot (or at least warm) interpretations. The temperature is a product of emotional loading.

Reform

When we left Germany in the summer of 1968 a massive three-pronged reform was being implemented by the *Bundesregierung* (federal government). Administrative changes included the consolidation of five villages, including Schoenhausen, into one administrative unit, "Weinstadt." Agricultural reform legally and physically consolidated and restructured the fractionated Weinberge hillside vineyards. Educational changes included the redesign of curriculum and schoolbooks. The purpose of the reform was to modernize by making administration more effective, agriculture more productive, and education, particularly at the elementary school level, less sentimental and land- and village-oriented and more modern/urban.

We returned in 1977 to see what effect this reform had on the transmission of culture in the school and particularly in the instrumental choices made by a comparable sample of schoolchildren, and their teachers and parents.

We found the same ideal-romantic and pragmatic clusterings of images and values. But we were surprised to find that the sample as a whole was more conservative, more ideal-romantic, or "enduring self" oriented than in 1968, before the reform to modernize and desentimentalize had really begun. If the reform had any effect on instrumental preferences it was to drive them in precisely the opposite direction than the one intended. We have found this to be very disturbing to the German officials responsible for reform.

We were even more surprised to find that the females in our 1977 sample, much more frequently than males, expressed ideal-romantic instrumental preferences. In response to some choices, such as the quiet evening at home versus the festive evening in a pub, there was virtually a 100% reversal.

Most often expressed in the supporting rationales for these ideal-romantic preferences were statements expressing fear of isolation, loss of friendly contacts, regret at work separation from spouses and extended family (the vineyard was a family enterprise) and fear of loss of influence in domestic affairs. These respondents correctly, in our opinion, perceived the effects of the change from a land- and family-based economy to a factory-based, urbanized economy and lifestyle as the loss of status, influence, personal security and complementary sex roles.

We interpret both the conservative swing for the sample as a whole, and the reversal in instrumental preferences by the females in the sample, as defensive reactions to changes associated with the mandated modernization and urbanization. These changes threaten the enduring, collective, ideal romantic self. The ideal-romantic cluster and enduring collective self extends back far into German imagery and history. The little village nestled in its own protective valley, happy rosy-cheeked children playing in flower-decked meadows, vigorous adults haying, cultivating, and harvesting, the friendly Gasthaus, nature, all surrounding and representing the beloved *Heimat* (home place), is never far from the surface, it seems, in everyone's fantasy. The sentimentality about the *Heimat* is hard for us transient Americans to understand, and it became, indeed, an increasingly favorite target of scorn and ridicule by German intellectuals. We hypothesize that it is deep in the fantasy life of at least the residents of Schoenhausen - even among the migrants from urbanized sectors of greater Germany - and that it constitutes a very significant aspect of the enduring collective self for these people, which was threatened by reform predicated solely on the basis of rationality and efficiency.

Conclusion

It would be difficult for us to account for the emotional loading of the responses to the IAI and to reform if they were governed solely by rational, or "cool," cognitive processes. The concept of self helps to explain the observed phenomena. The concept of self also makes it a little easier to talk about context.

We are not sure, however, that "self" serves us significantly better than a personality construct would, and a personality or ego construct would have the advantage of some paradigms to guide analysis. Constructions of self as used by anthropologists at present appear to be largely innocent of such paradigms, though the cultural analysis is not unguided. One is free to construct almost any kind of a self one wants to, governed only by rules that are heuristic to the native cultural context and the relativistic view. Perhaps this is as it should be, at least for now.

It particularly interesting to us old-timers to recognize the resurgence of interest in questions about the individual and culture that we were trying to solve in the 1940's and 1950's. The questions are not quite the same and the answers are different enough to be interesting, even if at times vexing. The fact that these kinds of questions are being asked again decades later speaks for their merit.

Notes

1. We have cited only literature directly relevant and referred to in this paper, but have included in the bibliography the principal works that we read to prepare this paper, with the thought that it might be useful to others. We acknowledge with gratitude the work of Laura Jones who searched out relevant titles and organized them for us.
2. The terms "defamiliarization" and "cross-cultural juxtaposition" are from Marcus and Fisher (1986). At the time we wrote the essay on reflective cross-cultural interviewing (G. and L. Spindler 1987) we had not yet read Marcus and Fisher.

Postscript (Louise Spindler)

In commenting on and summarizing the thrust of the newer approaches focussing on self, personhood, emotion, etc., Marcus and Fischer wrote:

Today, in writing ethnography, there is relatively less attention paid to social activity, and more to the categories, metaphors and rhetoric embodied in the accounts that informants give of their cultures to ethnographers.

(Marcus and Fischer 1986: 46-47)

To the extent that this is true, one worries about the slippage that occurs between the informant's account and the real behavior itself. Feelings are difficult to recreate for the ethnographer. To witness the emotionally charged behavior would make the account more believable. Though we, in our research, use the IAI and have used projective tests, we feel compelled to observe behavior as directly and intimately as possible. Observing behavior permits us to formulate sensible questions. Interviews, life histories, and responses to instruments such as the IAI permit tentative answers which then, to us, require further observation of behavior.

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