University of Alberta

Invitations to Sociology: Constructing Classroom Introductions

by

Alecia Lynn Wagner

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Sociology

©Alecia Wagner
Spring 2011
Edmonton, Alberta

…rather than being directly present in words, meaning, including the meaning of sociology, is generated through shifting relations *between* words or signs. Sociology is constituted in social relations like those it studies.

-Game and Metcalfe 1996: 1-2, emphasis in original

Abstract

This thesis focuses on a temporally-limited "slice" of the Introductory Sociology course as one way into thinking about how the discipline of sociology is constituted by the same kind of social relations it studies. Invitations to sociology are conceptualized using Goffman's interactionist theory insofar as these events initiate social relationships between students and instructors that come to discursively constitute the discipline itself. I observed the first two lectures of the course, conducted semi-structured interviews and analyzed syllabi from a convenience sample of five instructors located at two different universities in a mid-sized Western Canadian city. Using a constructivist epistemological frame I offer four interpretations of discursive subject positions that capture participants' understandings: Client, Engaged Learner, Service Provider, and Sherpa. These subject positions and social relationships highlight the constructed nature of an invitation to sociology while exploring the ideological elements of a social event that normally reside beyond discursive boundaries.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the instructors who opened their classrooms and themselves to me. I feel privileged to have heard your stories and they continue to resonate in my thoughts and bear on my practices.

I am grateful to Judith Golec, Lise Gotell and Terry Carson who have helped me see this project to completion, as well as Doug Aoki and Jana Grekul who played important roles in its development. Most importantly, I would like to acknowledge Sharon Rosenberg, who showed me that there are multiple ways of being in the university; this has proven to be a most haunting and productive invitation. Thank you to Angela and Julia for offering me a sense of community within a new program and supporting me in the race to the finish line.

To the families, both biological and adopted, who welcomed me into their homes, fed me at their tables, and sent me home with leftovers; you have always reminded me that I am loved during this rather isolating process. Lastly, thank you to Brent for reminding me that one can pursue scholarly life with a passionate heart.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1
Introduction

I was drawn to exploring the discipline of sociology as a socially constructed product because I was excited and inspired by theorists and texts that speak to this social process. This idea first captured my imagination when I read Ann Game and Andrew Metcalfe's text <u>Passionate Sociology</u>. A sentence on the second page of their text gave me reason to pause when I encountered it for the first time: "sociology is constituted in social relations like those it studies" (1996: 2). In <u>Passionate Sociology</u> the authors invite readers to imagine the micro-level discourses and social relationships through which sociologists negotiate and shape the discipline they work in. The text is organized into chapters titled simply "school", "writing" or "reading" as a way into thinking through Peter Berger's assertion that "the game of sociology goes on in a spacious playground" (1963: 18). Though the authors express their own political commitments (a "passionate" sociology), they offer discussions that speak to the negotiations, ambiguity and tensions that sociologists grapple with in their practices. Although Game and Metcalfe invited me to wonder about the *discipline* as constructed I focused this interest down to look at the construction of an introduction to sociology. This focus contained my project within modest and pragmatic parameters for a Masters level thesis. I arrived at this decision because Game and Metcalfe provoked me to consider my own experiences as a tutorial leader in an Introductory Sociology course. With their text, I began to ask: "What kind of sociology am I introducing my students to? What kind of subject positions have I made available to them and

myself?" To understand my own experiences, and those of other introductory sociology instructors I turned to literature that discusses teaching and learning in post-secondary education to find that I encountered the same difficulty Judith Halasz and Peter Kaufman did: sociology, specifically Introductory Sociology was "notably underrepresented" in this field (2008: 301). Curious about this "puzzling omission" (Halasz and Kaufman 2008: 301), an article by Robert Brym helped shed light on some of the social discourses that help explain this situation. Brym writes that for many, the Introductory Sociology course is understood as an "affliction" that burdens both students and instructors, one that in fact distracts and impedes their achievement of real, academic accomplishments (Brym, February-March 2009: 14). In addition to this, dominant discourses position the stereotypical sociology professor as one who "performs supposedly menial work widely seen as suited only to untenured faculty members, advanced graduate students, and other personnel at the bottom rung of the academic ladder" (Brym, February-March 2009: 14). These stereotypes of the course and it's instructor are indicative of a family of discourses that claim there is "nothing to see" when we look at the introductory sociology course; knowledge about this event is essentially regarded as an "obviousness" (Althusser 2008: 46). Indeed, in casual conversation with both faculty and graduate students in my department, these discourses were repeated to me in various forms. I began to get the impression that studying "everyday life" did not include proposals to "exoticize the domestic" (Bourdieu 1988: xi) insofar as my interest in introductory sociology threatened to disrupt obvious common sense issues that are "seldom debated and

2

generally regarded as settled" (Wirth 1936: introduction xxiii) among those I spoke to. From this experience of piecing together the necessary history behind the "puzzling omission", I experienced a kind of "'culture shock' minus the geographical displacement" (Berger 1963: 23) as common sense discourses about Introductory Sociology, teaching, students, and instructors became denaturalized.

To further refine my research object, I have focused on one temporal "slice" of the introductory sociology course: the invitation to sociology that occurs within the first two days. This distinction between introduction and invitation is used throughout my piece and functions to remind the reader that my data comprises only a "slice" of the introductory sociology course. In total I worked with five post-secondary instructors who were teaching Introductory Sociology courses at two different institutions in a mid-sized Western Canadian city during the 2009-2010 academic year. I conducted nine interviews in total[1], observed six days of introductory sociology lecture classes and analyzed course syllabi prepared by these instructors. Through these methods I was able to weave the data I collected together with existing literature to offer a complex discussion about the invitations to sociology constructed in the Introductory Sociology course. This research can be thought of as capturing a small wedge of my broader interest in the construction of the discipline of sociology.

---

[1] Interviews were structured around my observations from lecture as well as my analysis of their course syllabus. Although these interviews were conducted after the first few days of class the focus was retrospective or backward-looking to this "slice" of the course.

Existing literature about introductory sociology that I encountered tends to focus on a single practice or issue, such as: "icebreaker" activities for the first day of class, the structure or content of the course syllabus, a set of examples used to discuss a particular sociological concept, critiques of course textbooks or a unique course assignment[2]. Rather than focusing on a single practice or issue to the exclusion of others, an approach that is already well-represented, my analysis uses data from three different elements that highlight the intersection of micro-level discourses, practices and relationships that constitute the an invitation to sociology. This opens a space to wonder about how elements of the invitation relate to one another, for example: how might a reference in the syllabus relate to an instructor's comment made in lecture? How are students recruited or "hailed" (Althusser 2008: 48) in syllabi? How do discourses of the neoliberal university appear in syllabi? Lecture? In this way, my research knits together existing literature in sociology and education by considering the ideological elements and social dynamics of a classroom invitation. This is one of the primary contributions this work makes in addition to drawing much needed attention to the invitations to sociology constructed in the introductory course. Although the research object is a precise, and temporally specific event, I have been able to situate and weave together a diverse sample of discourses within my analysis, a task that would have otherwise been too onerous within the parameters of a Masters program.

In the following chapter (Chapter 2) I discuss some of the theoretical influences that "frame up" invitations and the introductory sociology course for

---

[2] References for this existing literature are noted in the following chapter.

the purposes of my analysis. When one considers common synonyms for the verb "to introduce", including: acquaint, expose, suggest, establish, orient and inaugurate, it becomes clear that the act of introducing carries with it political significance. In the introduction to The <u>Presentation of Self in Everyday Life</u> Erving Goffman notes that first impressions are crucial as the information one (in this case, the student) initially possesses about others and their situation figures strongly in future definitions of the situation, their own responsive action (1959: 10) and most pragmatically, whether they remain registered in the course. Although the invitation is only a slice of the course, and an even smaller slice of the discipline, Goffman insists that introductions, as social events, can act as a beginning or origin point for future interactions and relationships. Although, "additions and modifications…will of course occur", Goffman suggests that "these later developments [are commonly] related without contradiction to, and even built up from, the initial positions taken by…several participants" in the interaction (1959: 10). In this chapter I argue that there is indeed "something to see" in the introductory course as this social event offer a "goldmine" of data and can be thought of as an ideal medium through which we can grapple with the idea that the discipline of sociology is "constituted in social relations like those it studies" (Game and Metcalfe 1996: 2). Through my discussion of Goffman's dramaturgical theory I also offer discussion of existing literature regarding: the neoliberal university, instructor's educational biography, course syllabi, and issues of gendered inequality that female instructors encounter in the university classroom.

The methodology chapter (Chapter 3) begins with a brief outline of the constructivist epistemological groundings from which I pursued this project. I begin by noting Bent Flyvbjerg's refusal to participate in the "science wars" (2004: 1) and how his position rests upon the epistemological implications of Anthony Giddens' "double hermeneutic" (1984: 284) [3]. The double hermeneutic first draws attention to the self-interpretations made by research participants, and then to the researcher's work to create their own interpretations that synthesize the participants first-order interpretations. The second set of interpretations contained within the double hermeneutic invite an exploration of the interpretive practices that I engage in as a researcher, this discussion incorporates John Van Maanen's concept of "personalized authority" (1988: 84) and articulates the nature of the knowledge I offer here. This section is closed with three questions that guided the interpretive work I engaged in with instructors' first order interpretations. Following this, I review the data collection methods used and my reflections on their use. As I collected data from three different sources I outline the details of lecture observation, the structure of interviews, as well as how I proceeded with analysis of syllabi. In this section, I also reflect on some important issues that I grappled with during the research process.

My interpretive work situates constructed invitations as only one component that constitutes the introductory course and discipline of sociology more broadly. Considering this, I do not make claims about the discipline of sociology, the broader sociological community or the trajectory of students,

[3] See Giddens *The Constitution of Society* Chapter 6 for a full discussion.

instructors or the course past the second day of lecture. As Goffman describes an introduction as an event that occurs between individuals, these two chapters explore the subject positions of students and instructors that are contained within the invitations I analyzed.

The first interpretive chapter (Chapter 4) focuses on instructors' constructions of students in the introductory course. Situated within the neoliberal university, I offer an interpretation of students as Clients based on the interpretations of instructors. This interpretation is explored through various issues including: instructors encounters with student entitlement, instructors understanding of the administrative components of syllabi, the phenomenon of course-shopping and the demanding characteristics that instructors associated with their interpretation of Clients. My interpretive discussion opens up the possibility that invitations to sociology may actually act as events that mark out the parameters and details of the relationships rendered possible within the neoliberal and consumer culture of the contemporary university. In the second section of this chapter I offer an interpretation of Engaged Learners that contrasts that of Clients. Instructors interpreted the Engaged Learner as a student who is motivated to learn and possesses valuable knowledge that can be incorporated into an introduction to sociology. Instructors also spoke about their interpretation of Engaged Learners in reference to short reflective written assignments, so I discuss their understanding of this practice as a way of refining my interpretation. My interpretation of Engaged Learners encourages one to consider how an

invitation to sociology can be thought of as an attempt to wed student's lives to sociology.

In the second interpretive chapter (Chapter 5) I discuss two interpretations of instructors: Service Providers and Sherpa. The Service Provider interpretation emerges, in part, in response to the Client interpretation discussed in the previous chapter. Instructors' interpretation of their capacity in this role was foregrounded by the pressure they feel to "edutain" Clients, or in contrast, act as an absolute expert in the classroom. In this section I invite consideration of how an invitation to sociology may initiate students into the hierarchical organization of this institution. The metaphor of the instructor as Sherpa is used to described instructors interpretation of their role as tour-guides, mentors and moderators of discussion in the classroom. This discussion encourages one to think about an invitation to sociology as an invitation to a particular kind of intellectual journey.

In Chapter 6, the final chapter, I summarize the two interpretations that derive from my research and offer ways of thinking about an introduction to sociology that extends beyond the local and specific context I worked within. I also discuss some considerations for future research and my informal reflection on the research process. Although this research focuses on only a "slice" that constitutes the discipline of sociology, the analysis I provide draws much needed attention to initial presentations of sociology offered at the introductory level. In Practice Makes Practice Deborah Britzman elucidates how I have come to think about the act of inviting as politically productive one that is carried out by

instructors who are necessarily invested in particular ideological discourses and

practices. She writes:

> Teachers possess the power to legitimate or refuse
> what can be spoken and who can speak. They have
> the power to authorize discourse as authoritative
> and internally persuasive…practice is productive: it
> produces and authorizes knowledge, identities, and
> voices, all of which persuade and are persuaded by
> relations of power (2003: 240).

My analysis offers one way into thinking about how micro-level interactions and

practices in the introductory course provide particular invitations to sociology as

this discipline is only one "game" among many in "the social carnival that we call

scholarship" (Berger 1968: 164).

Chapter 2
Theoretical Influences

> Writing fixes thoughts on paper. It externalizes what in some sense is internal; it distances us from our immediate lived involvements with the things of our world. As we stare at the paper, and stare at what we have written, our objectified thinking now stares back at us (Van Manen, 2005: 125).

It is imperative that I elucidate for the reader some of the theoretical work that has informed this project. Drawing on social theory (Althusser, Bourdieu and Goffman) and educational literature (Apple, Britzman and Giroux) this chapter is an exercise in externalizing the ideas I have relied upon throughout this project as I have woven together existing literature from two different fields. This chapter elucidates how I have conceptualized invitations in the Introductory Sociology course as objects of study and my discussion is organized around some of Goffman's dramaturgical principles to offer a way into thinking about the micro and macro-level discourses that instructors negotiate in creating this invitation. Goffman's work tethers my abstract interests to a particular social event that allows me to focus on the Introductory Sociology instructor as one who negotiates discourses about sociology, teaching, and the university in constructing an invitation to the discipline. As the social event in question occurs in the classroom I have added to this dramaturgical scaffolding relevant literature from the field of higher education.

The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology situates Goffman's dramaturgical approach within a symbolic interactionist tradition and provides a succinct description of this theory: "Social roles are…analogous to those in a

theatre…people project images of themselves, usually in ways that best serve their own ends, because such information helps to define the situation and create appropriate expectations (Abercrombie, N. et al 2000: 105). In The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1959) Goffman emphasizes how social interactions always involve micro-level dynamics and negotiations through which we strategically construct the social situation and ourselves. The dramaturgical scaffolding of everyday interactions draws attention to these micro-level interactions and instructor negotiations that constitute the introductory course while offering a way into thinking about how "sociology's truths are not found but imaginatively fabricated with specific tools" (Game and Metcalfe 1996: 66). One highly productive aspect of Goffman's work is the notion that social actors are always invested in certain outcomes that impact the kinds, and content of, their interactions with others. I would like to begin this chapter by considering some of the ways in which instructors are invested agents and the social conditions that shape their potential investments. At the most obvious level, Sociology 100 instructors express investedness as they negotiate existing discourses around curriculum content and participate in processes of "selective tradition" where certain knowledges, practices and relationships are "passed off as 'the tradition,' *the* significant past" (Apple 1990:6)[4]. As a critical educational

---

[4] Although my analysis does not focus on particular details of sociological content (ie. is Marx mentioned? How is Harriet Martineau introduced?) contained within the invitation, this literature shaped my understanding of the classroom as a politicized space. Also, from my observations in the classroom: instructors did not begin lecturing about specific sociological theorists in detail on the first day of class, save for brief mention of Peter Berger or C. Wright Mills.

11

theorist, Michael Apple argues that the process of education is a political one and in his contributions to the field of curriculum studies, argues that:

> …the selectivity [regarding curriculum and practices] is the point; the way in which, from a whole possible area of past and present, certain meanings and practices are chosen for emphasis, [while] certain other meanings and practices are neglected and excluded (1990: 6).

This selectivity is not merely a matter of an instructor's arbitrary personal preferences that span an infinite range of possibilities rather, this investedness is conditioned by the social milieu in which one acts[5]. The selective decisions that instructors make are situated within particular social contexts and corresponding discourses available; choices are limited by pre-existing, though not static, discourses about sociology, teaching and the university for example. Various other constraints such as departmental precedents and available resources (such as textbooks, or teaching assistants) also situate the instructor's investedness in particular ways. Furthermore, the likelihood of an instructor making certain choices is conditioned by the enabling limits of social rewards and social costs

---

[5]The issue is not whether one is invested or neutral, but what investments one expresses and the necessary ignorances that are required for this. In this way, one cannot avoid practicing the selectivity that Apple refers to above. Considering this, claims to neutrality regarding a particular issue are quite revealing as this is a political act in itself. A brief quotation from Britzman's work with student teachers clarifies this dynamic as it plays on in a classroom setting: "…not to take up controversial issues does not mean that the classroom is empty of controversy…such avoidance does not create an ideologically neutral classroom. Rather, it reproduces the dominant ideology as the desirable ideology (2003: 192). Thus, claims to neutrality remain reliant upon naturalized ideologies and hegemonic practices.

meted out by a variety of stakeholders[6]. Britzman captures the micro-level political nature of this process arguing that "power works through persons and is "instantiated in action, as… regular and routine phenomenon"" (2003: 39) that comprise the social situation. In <u>Homo Academicus</u> (1988) Pierre Bourdieu also claims that it is precisely the regular and routine aspects of social life that we ought to explore and asserts that the sociologist "should not…domesticate the exotic, but…exoticize the domestic" (xi).

We can identify how power works through actors in regular and routine practices when we attend to the ways in which an instructor's agency is situated within broader neoliberal discourses about the university and corresponding departmental and institutional precedents. In negotiating the construction of an Introductory Sociology course, neoliberal discourses about the university figured prominently in instructor's articulation of particular investments and the variety of investments that are rendered intelligible within this space. In <u>Beyond the Corporate University</u>, Henry Giroux introduces the neoliberal university as an institution that exists in reference to broader cultural discourses. He writes:

> As neoliberalism speads its ideology, power, and influence over all aspects of society, there is a growing dislike for all things social, public, and collective….[while] the obligations of citizenship [become] narrowly defined through the imperatives of consumption and the dynamics of the marketplace… (2001: 1).

---

[6] As social rewards also function as mechanisms of social control, it is interesting to note that teaching awards, esteem from colleagues, and positive student feedback condition the kinds of sociology that proliferate and the pedagogical practices that instructors privilege.

13

Bill Readings has explored how these ideas manifest in the contemporary university and notes some key characteristics of this institution, including: shifts away from traditional values of inquiry and scholarship, increased attention to rhetorics about "excellence"[7] and training, strong presence of public-private partnerships, concerns about a university's brand or reputation and discourses that represent teaching as a primarily administrative task (1996). In addition to these issues, Giroux suggests that in the neoliberal university teaching has been "stripped of its ethical and political obligations and [has been] refined primarily as a matter of management, efficiency, and cost effectiveness[8]" (2001:3). Within this contemporary representation of the university, Readings argues that teaching has become a "triple administrative function" where, within the classroom, students are *administered* by teachers, the *administrative* class is trained/reproduced and knowledge is *administered* to students in terms of functional programming (1996:

---

[7] Readings suggests that universities have shifted away from thinking about their work in terms of "culture" and towards concerns about "excellence". He argues that the nation-state is "no longer the major site at which capital reproduces itself" (1996: 13) and thus universities no longer function in reference to ideas about national culture. The content of teaching and research within these universities has come to matter very little next to concerns that this work is done in reference to discourses of "excellence".

[8] Though academics in all disciplines are subject to university-wide precedents and departmental guidelines, this contextualization is particularly intriguing in the introductory sociology classroom because instructors and undergraduate students live out many of the social mechanisms introduced in their textbooks. In a textbook used by one of the instructors I worked with, some of these concepts included: McDonaldization, groupthink, bureaucratization, alienation, specialized division of labour, hierarchies of authority, organizational culture and trained incapacity. This parallel between sociological course content and phenomenological experiences in the university offers an interesting opportunity for reflection upon the relationship between sociological course content, the sociological classroom and the discipline of sociology most broadly.

152). Discourses of the neoliberal university limited the kind of invitations that instructor's believed they could construct in the introductory course. For example, concerns about "accounting" necessitate particular assessment strategies and administrative procedures while the valuation of "efficiency" and "consistency" also shape lecture style and the sociological content that is presented to students. As instructors appeal to, contest and alter discourses that comprise the neoliberal university, they shape the parameters of the invitation they offer students: does this invitation to sociology mimic the logics of bureaucratic corporations? Does it promise an "administration" of knowledge to students? Does the introduction initiate students into a relationship characterized by maximum efficiency, consistency and unambiguity? Apple maintains that institutional discourses, such as that of the neoliberal university, operate through actors as enabling limits that comprise the ideological background upon which certain practices or elements come to be recognized as "regular and routine" within an invitation to sociology. Considering this, practices within a classroom are related to particular ideological underpinnings while these discourses in turn shape the criteria used to determine whether sociological practices are legitimate and properly academic.

As invested actors who appropriate institutional policies in relation to their needs and experiences, the educational biographies of instructors figure into their construction of invitations to sociology. Britzman discusses the influence of educational biography in her study of student teachers, remarking:

> Teachers bring to their work their own idiomatic school biography, the conflicted history of their own deep investments in and ambivalence about

15

what a teacher is and does, and likewise they anticipate their dreams of students, their hopes for colleagues, and their fantasies for recognition and learning (2003: 2).

The educational history of instructors thus contains sociological, pedagogical and cultural narratives that shape one's thinking about the introductory course and the kind of invitation they offer students[9]. An important part of one's educational biography includes "well-worn and commonsensical images of the [professor's] work" (Britzman 2003: 27) that condition the pedagogical relationships one imagines are possible and preferred. Instructors pull on these common sense representations from their history, and Britzman argues that this accounts in part for the "persistency of particular worldviews, orientations, dispositions, and cultural myths that dominate out thinking and, in unintended ways, select the practices that are available in educational life" (2003: 27). Narratives located within one's educational biography may include: ideas about the goals of sociological research, appropriate methods of inquiry, and recollections of positive and negative relationships with past instructors. These narratives condition the kind of instructor one will be, the kind of student one wants to teach, and the kind of sociology one comes to privilege. However, although enduring personal and cultural narratives do indeed offer sets of "ideal images,

---

[9] Broader cultural narratives also shape ideas about what is possible within introductory sociology classrooms and how this situation relates to the discipline and the broader social world. These ideas may be coupled with explicit political loyalties or insistence that one is politically neutral. It is important to note that actors who claim to be non-partisan also rely upon ideological narratives about how the social world ought to be. However, because these narratives are often seen as natural or necessary, they obscure or erase the ideological dimension of the narrative.

definitions, and justifications [that can be] taken up as measures for thought, affect, and practice" (Britzman 2003: 30) they are not absolute: one can struggle and play with biographical narratives in ways that add nuanced tensions to existing social discourses.

The course syllabus is one site where institutional discourses (discussed as neoliberalism here) intersect with an instructor's educational biography. I was attuned to the sociological promise of syllabi by a 2006 article by Liz Grauerholz and Greg Gibson where they conducted a quantitative analysis of 418 syllabi published by the American Sociological Association Teaching Resource Centre. These authors concluded that syllabi offer "insight into some of the most important skills or knowledge that sociologists hope to teach their students and how they attempt to achieve these goals" (2006: 10). However, as a document that is highly regulated by institutional precedents, the syllabus contains elements that individual instructors feel are important to their invitation *along with* manifestations of hegemonic neoliberal discourses of the university. Considering this, syllabi interest me insofar as they suggest invitations to certain subject positions. In Monsters in Literature Britzman speaks to how one's curriculum implies the instructor's desires and the kind of student one expects to meet. Her description is apt for syllabi as well:

> …I wished the course title, 'Monsters in Literature'
> would convey, in miniature, the whole story of what
> students could expect to learn…The course title, so
> I thought, was a short cut, a pedagogical telegraph,
> perhaps even a wish for pedagogical telepathy.
> Indeed, I was convinced that students who signed

17

up for the course would already be interested in my
ideal (2004: 258).

In this way, syllabi construct a student who is not yet present and a situation that
is yet to be. As a written invitation, this document constrains the nature of the
event that will occur, making available certain subject positions before the other
party even arrives.

In recognizing sociology instructors as complex social actors who are
invested in various (sometimes contradictory) discourses, it becomes clear that
simplistic archetypes of this figure and their course obscure the potential
ideological variability of invitations to sociology. As instructors decided how to
appropriate institutional precedents, and their own educational biography, these
decisions also manifested in the presentation of self. Moving from negotiation of
issues like the ones discussed above, it is important to consider how one's self-
presentation also betrays particular pedagogical and sociological investments that
constitute an element of the invitation offered to students. I have focused on an
instructor's presentation of self on the first day of class because many sociologists
have discussed how this can set the "tone" for the entire semester of the sociology
course (Brouillette and Turner 1992: 279, Dorn 1987: 63, Kaufman 1997: 310,
Winston 2007: 161). In this encounter, an instructor makes a first impression on
their students and this begins their relationship for the rest of the semester. Jane
Tompkins describes the anxiety that can result from the awareness that one's
performance is being read and interpreted by others in the classroom:

> Practically everything about you is open to
> inspection and speculation when you talk in class

since, in speaking, your accent, your vocabulary, the intonations of your voice, your display of feeling or lack of it, the knowledge you can call on, or not, all contain clues about who you are – your social class, ethnic background, sense of yourself as a gendered being, degree of self-knowledge, the way you relate to other people (1996: 210).

In addition to negotiations made on Goffman's "backstage" before the first day, instructors manage their presentation of self on the front stage when they actually begin lecture. One element of this front-stage performance involved responding to the kind of judgements they imagined students were making about them on the first day of class. I quote at length below some of the ways in which instructors spoke about the first day of class to demonstrate the "goldmine" of sociological data available here. For one instructor the first meeting establishes a somewhat antagonistic and evaluative relationship between students and instructors:

>…they're just coming to see what I'm like, basically how hard the course is and if it's easy, and I don't seem like a complete jackass, then they'll try to get in …The first time I taught intro, the first day of class I remember walking down, turning around at the lectern, and looking up and just having this literal: "holy shit! I don't know if I can do this!" just this mass and they're all staring at you, right? And they feed off your fear, right? (Ben, Interview 1, p17-18, 23).

Another, experienced this as a vulnerable front-stage performance:

>…and I think what it comes down to [is] Goffman; you're onstage when you're teaching, it's impression management, but the thing about teaching is that it's a fleeting moment, you can't have any do-overs…you're vulnerable in the moment that you're in front of [a lot of] students…you're on stage…there is no chance to re-do anything (Morgan, Interview 2, p10).

One saw this interaction as an opportunity to establish trust, and demonstrate their

openness towards students:

> …I feel completely safe talking about anything
> about me, trust is not an issue there when I'm
> trotting out my various life experiences. What's the
> worst that can happen?...I don't mind if they think
> ill of me, and I'm not telling them about my former
> life as a bank robber that the authorities don't know
> about (Sophie, Interview 2, p26-28).

and lastly, one instructor felt that in this first meeting one can strategically

challenge some hegemonic standards against which all instructors are measured:

> …the standard is the white middle-class male, so
> when he walks in the classroom, there is no trouble
> at all …our way is hierarchical and I have to play
> the game up to a point…play enough of the game so
> that you're within the rules…like it or hate it,
> you've got to do it, but within that you've got a lot
> of autonomy (Muriel, Interview 1, p25-35).

These quotations elucidate how one's presentation of self is conditioned by ideas

about the nature of this introductory encounter and speculation about the

interpretive practices that students engage in on the first day of class. Although

this course runs for a full semester, my research considers only the first

introductory encounters as key moments in the establishment of subject positions,

norms of interaction and the parameters of the situation. In demonstrating the

ways in which seemingly anodyne introductions are meaningful social events, I

hope to offer one way into thinking about invitations to sociology as constitutive

of this constructed discipline.

I would like to briefly expand upon Muriel's comment above as I found that the female instructors I worked with were very aware of the gendered dynamics operative within their classrooms. The issues that I outline below contextualize female instructors' presentation of self in the classroom and the relationships they may have to the discipline, colleagues and their institution. In It's Cold and Lonely at the Middle, Joanne Ardovini-Brooker offers an excellent summary of some of the issues that female professors encounter in the classroom. Although women have gained increased access to higher education, she insists that women's classrooms and their institutions are not "immune to the sexist ideologies that exist in…society" (2003: 1). Ardovini-Brooker explains that while many women "must jump through hoops of fire" to be taken seriously in academe, their work continues to be "devalued, questioned, challenged, and even belittled…by the very students [they] are trying to educate" (2003: 2). This discrimination often manifests in hostile behaviour from students that may include "non-verbal put-downs, disrupti[ons] [in] the class, sighs, [and] students talking among themselves" (2003: 2) during lectures. Relative to male professors, female instructors also encounter more students who tend to devalue their "expertise, scholarship, or contribution[s]" (Ardovini-Brooker 2003: 29) to the classroom. This devaluation can take the form of "scepticism of ability, disbelief, challenging authority, granting less credence…and contradicting statements made by female faculty" (Ardovini-Brooker 2003: 29). Disrespectful behaviour such as "lack of attendance, tardiness, leaving class earlier, talking during class, and doing other work during class" (Ardovini-Brooker 2003: 30) occurs with more frequency in

21

courses with female instructors as well. Students also tend to exhibit more negative body language towards female instructors; this can take the form of "turning away, lack of eye contact, and general inattentiveness" in the classroom (2003: 30). Related to these challenges, the achievements of men and women in academe also tend to be judged differently by students; Ardovini-Brooker reviews literature suggesting that the successes of women are often attributed to external "luck" or the women themselves are perceived to be "bitchy" because their behaviour contains traditionally masculine traits (2003: 31). Thus, in thinking about the presentation of self in the classroom, it is key to keep in mind that gendered stereotypes and sexist ideology that will be studied in the classroom are, at the same time, operative within it. The female instructors that I worked with were aware that many students would recognize them as an exception to the "normal" male professor and thus felt that their gender was an additional factor that shaped their presentation of self in the classroom.

I have attended to the presentation of self on the first day of class because initial encounters between actors define the social situation and appropriate roles for those involved. Goffman argues that social situations are defined by an actor's presentation of self insofar as their performance places a moral demand upon others and determines the parameters of their relationship[10]. Goffman elaborates:

> …the initial definition of the situation projected by an individual tends to provide a plan for the co-operative activity that follows… any projected definition of the situation also has a distinctive moral character…when an individual projects a

---

[10] In this case the "situation" refers to the introductory sociology course.

> definition of the situation and thereby makes an
> implicit or explicit claim to be a person of a
> particular kind, [one] automatically exerts a moral
> demand upon the others, obliging [others] to value
> and treat [them] in the manner that persons of
> [their] kind have a right to expect (1959: 13).

In the affirmative presentation of self one also "implicitly forgoes all claims to be things he does not appear to be and hence forgoes the treatment that would be appropriate for such individuals" (Goffman 1959: 13). When instructors present themselves to students they draw on knowledges and discourses that define "persons of their kind", presuming that students also have access to these archetypes. The moral demand that results from this interaction, Goffman argues, exists as others are "informed…as to what is and as to what they *ought* to see as the 'is'" by another actor (1959: 13). Course textbooks can exert a similar moral demand and significantly shape the situation of an introduction to sociology. Nicholas Babchuk and Bruce Keith (1995) in fact, argue that the texts selected ought to be seriously evaluated to ensure that they align with the goals of the introductory sociology course. Although these authors confine their interest to the particular content of the textbook (ie. is postmodernism introduced as a major perspective?)[11] my interest, once again, cannot be captured in a simple content analysis of this resource.

In summary, I have focused on the instructor as the primary agent in this interaction as those I worked with felt that the act of inviting students is both a

---

[11] For a survey of literature that addresses the specific content of sociology textbooks see Taub and Fanflik 2000, Suarez and Balaji 2007, Stolley and Hill 1996, Marquez 1994, Lewis and Humphrey 2005, and Hall 2000.

privilege and burden. Also, only instructors (not students) were included in the study as research participants. Sophie described her role in the classroom as an example of "managing" and trying to "make sure that you get the class culture, as much as possible, where you want it" (Interview 2, p16). On the first day of class instructors felt like it was their responsibility to create an invitation that resulted in the kind of situation that they wanted in the course. In this type of interaction then, students come to "know in advance what [is] expect[ed] of them" and thus also "know how best to act in order to call forth a desired response from [the instructor]" (Goffman 1959: 1). Instructor's presentation of self calls out to particular kinds of students[12]; Louis Althusser describes this dynamic as the social act of "hailing" where one is "recruited" (2008: 48) into particular subject positions that serve particular interests. Thus, while instructors strategically present themselves they are also strategically limiting the kinds of subject positions available to students in their invitation to sociology on the first days of class.

This section has made clear some of the issues and dynamics that denaturalize invitations to sociology and frame the introductory course as unstable and political event. Invitations to sociology are constructed in reference to the same social issues that it researches: competing discourses, power differentials and sacred narratives that "authorize the classification, arrangement,

---

[12] There is no simple linear correspondence between an instructor's intentions and student's interpretations of their performance. However, it is fair to characterize this first encounter as a "hailing" insofar as the first day of class sets out social/relational parameters/norms for the remainder of the course.

and selection of forms of knowledge" (Britzman 2003: 51). These discourses and narratives that instructors negotiate:

> Define the limits of relevancy…bracket…our definitions of context and content, and impose…measures of credibility that determine what we accept and reject as true and as false. [They]…stipulate…the boundaries of discourse – what is spoken and what remains unsaid – and provide…the borders of interpretation (Britzman 2003: 51).

The Introductory Sociology course clearly introduces more than a literal survey of key figures, dominant theoretical perspectives and building-block concepts; this social event contains many of the dramaturgical principles that Goffman introduced as the subject positions of instructors and students are introduced and relationships initiated. Looking at invitations to sociology in the introductory course in this way is unsettling because it involves looking beyond trendy buzzwords that can be listed off from the "top of our heads" (Apple 1990:5) and instead confronts deep-seated commitments that reside at the "bottom" of our social consciousness. Considering this, in the next chapter I turn to the epistemological background that grounds my inquiry.

Chapter 3
Methodology

This chapter is divided into two sections: epistemological groundings and methods employed. As my objectified thinking "stares back" at me in the previous chapter, I would like to first discuss the epistemological assumptions that structure my forthcoming analysis. This is a way of looking beyond caged displays of "methodological correctness" (Kincheloe and McLaren 1994:151) that ignore the paradigm within which research was conducted. Though I've drawn from a variety of different authors, a constructivist approach to social reality and research methodology best represents my epistemological foundation. I begin with Flyvbjerg's rejection of the science wars, as a way of leading into Giddens' "double hermeneutic" (1988: 84), and van Maanen's concept of "personalized authority" (1988: 84) to articulate the constructivist sensibilities that this research relies upon. The second portion of this chapter moves toward a more concrete discussion about how I conducted this research, utilizing the traditional markers of a methods chapter: discussion regarding the sampling procedure, selection of participants, data collection and interpretation practices. I do however, deviate from the traditional structure in draw on personal fieldnotes and transcript excerpts to elucidate the use of certain methods and how I grappled with important issues that arose.

Epistemological Groundings

> Questions of method are secondary to questions of paradigm…[which is defined] as the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method, but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways (Guba and Lincoln 1994: 105).

> Human social activities…are recursive…they are not brought into being by social actors but are continually recreated by them *via the very means whereby they express themselves as actors*. In and through their actions, agents reproduce the conditions that make these activities possible (Giddens, 1993: 89, emphasis mine).

In Making Social Science Matter, Flyvbjerg argues that social scientists need not participate in "Science Wars" (2007: 1) that interpellate social science research as a "battered tramp steamer chugging along vainly in the wake of the sleek cruiser of the natural sciences" (Giddens 1987: 18). He also suggests that social science research ought not be subjected to traditional positivist or post-positivist criteria of legitimation (Flyvbjerg 2007: 3). Flyvbjerg cites Gidden's concept of the double hermeneutic as an idea that fundamentally distinguishes social science research from that of the natural sciences. Giddens' double hermeneutic grounds the epistemological underpinnings of this research insofar as this concept acknowledges research participants as self-interpreting subjects who have the capacity to reflect on, and make sense of their social world. In this way, the "object" of research is actually a "subject" (Flyvbjerg: 2007: 32) and the goal of social science research becomes one where the researcher seeks to understand a mosaic of local generalizations, shifting discourses, and micro-level practices

performed by actors with situated agencies. For constructivist social science research, the interpretations and individual constructions of social actors are what can be known about the social world. Positivist notions of "reality" and "truth" are not relevant here rather, what is regarded as "real" or "true" are the interpreted realities that guide the behaviour of individuals in the social world. Guba and Lincoln thus frame up the constructivist's research object as a collection of interpreted realities that are:

> …apprehendable in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, and local and specific in nature…and dependent for their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding the construction (Guba and Lincoln 1994: 110).

I approached the introductory sociology class in this way with special attention to how the instructors negotiated discourses available to them (Guba and Lincoln 1994: 110).

For the purposes of this research, I have used the term discourse to refer to a "body of language-use that is unified by common assumptions" and functions "as an ordered and structured framework within which people see their world" (Abercrombie 2000: 99). At any time, multiple discourses regarding the same issue exist and they may overlap, contradict or refine each other. A Foucauldian approach to discourse sees the social world as "discursively determined" insofar as "discourses make certain things sayable, thinkable and doable but others not" thus "closing off possibilities" for social actors (Abercrombie 2000: 99). In her discussion of critical discourse analysis, Ruth Wodak notes that "discourse is

28

socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned" (2007: 186) because it at once shapes the social world and is shaped by it. In working with instructors then, I sought to understand the discourses they draw on in their practices, the local generalizations they make about their situation, and the interpretive resources that they rely upon (Guba and Lincoln 1994: 112). In trying to understand the discursive patterns of those I worked with, I could then begin to think about how their practices reified discourses that, in turn, shape the landscape of their invitation to sociology. Considering this, the goal of data collection was to try and understand the self-interpretations of subjects, their relations to the social context and how they appropriate these interpretations in the construction of an invitation to sociology. This is a first step towards thinking about why people do what they do (Flyvbjerg 2004: 32-33) and how their practices are related to broader ideological dynamics. Considering this, as researchers work towards understanding the interpretations of participants, their findings may "not necessarily [be] news to those whom those findings are about" (Giddens 1984: 328). Researchers can however, offer different ways of thinking about what participants already know. When researchers work with data from social actors then, the aim is to not assess whether participant interpretations are "true" or "valid", instead, Michael Crotty offers some alternative criteria that can be used to think about the interpretations of participants and their constructions of the social world:

> There [are] no true or valid interpretation[s]. There are useful interpretations, to be sure…there are liberating forms of interpretations too…there are

> even interpretations that may be judged fulfilling and rewarding…'useful', 'liberating', 'fulfilling', 'rewarding' interpretations, yes. True or valid interpretations, no (1998: 47-48).

The second type of interpretations that form the *double* hermeneutic are made by social science researchers. These interpretations emerge as the researcher begins to analyze, make sense, and interpret the data collected from participants (Giddens 1984: 284). This interpretive work takes place alongside that of participants, thus social science research rests upon the interactions between two interpreting social subjects. The knowledge that derives from social science research then, cannot be reduced to stable and objective facts because it rests on these interpretations and interactions that do not, in any realist sense, "provide a literal account of what the world is like" (Schwandt 1994: 125). The interpretations I make throughout the research process then are necessarily tied to particular social contexts and interactions "inside" ideology. Both data and analyses are created and re-created by the researcher and participants, rather than discovered by the researcher alone. In constructivist research, knowledge is never absolute or final; the products of social science are reconceptualised as components of conversations that remain perpetually open to revision or contestation. As multiple and contradictory interpretations arise, knowledge about the social world continues to be refined (Guba and Lincoln 1994: 113): research subjects, readers and researchers "talk back" to one another to produce more informed and sophisticated interpretations of the social world. This brief discussion of the double hermeneutic best represents my project as an exercise in

looking beyond essentializing generalizations about the social world to consider the complicated discursive practices that both instructors and I participate in (Schwandt 1994: 125).

In thinking about the interpretive work that I engaged in as a researcher I have drawn on Van Maanen's discussion about "personalized authority" (1988: 74). This concept helps elucidate one of the ways in which I have attempted to work against (though never outside of) hegemonic social science narratives that present research as a "neat, packaged, unilinear" process where "dilemmas in the field are glossed over in an anodyne appendix" (1994: 85). More than just a stylistic decision, writing with personalized authority is a manifestation of epistemological commitments that the researcher holds (Van Maanan 1988: 84). Van Maanen argues that research narratives that utilize personalized authority work to convey, in a "modest, unassuming style", the researcher's "struggle[s] to piece together something reasonably coherent out of displays of initial disorder, doubt and difficulty" (1988: 75). Speaking with personalized authority, interpretive omnipotence is absent and instead, the local and particular ways in which the researcher's interpretations shaped data collection and analysis are highlighted (Van Maanen 1988:84). Personalized authority can also be thought of as a way of expressing how a sociologist grapples with a simultaneous reliance on, and critique of, common sociological narratives. Game and Metcalfe explain:

> sociologists who recognize their storytelling are more likely to understand that narratives limit the production of meaning *even as they enable it*. This recognition is not an admission of failure but a more

accurate, full and open account (1996: 68, emphasis mine).

Writing with personalized authority challenges the image of the researcher as "a passive, unremarkable character who simply stands around waiting for something to happen or for the arrival of the white flash of discovery" (Van Maanen 1988: 76). Instead, narratives that express one's personalized authority frame researchers as active participants and co-creators of research findings (Van Maanen 1988: 76). When research is thought of as a series of interpretive and perspectival acts, written texts can be recognized as rhetorical constructions that create a particular views of reality while reinscribing the discourses that make such views possible (Richardson 1997: 26). Laurel Richardson touches on how writing is a political act remarking that academics " choose how we write [and] these choices have poetic, rhetorical, ethical, and political implications (1997: 34). Indeed, Norman Denzin also comments on the ideological "work" that research narratives perform:

> Interpretation requires the telling of a story, or a narrative that states "things happen this way because" or "this happened, after this happened, because this happened first." Interpreters as storytellers tell narrative tales with beginnings, middles and ends. These tales always embody implicit and explicit theories (1994: 500).

Richardson and Denzin both see research monographs as "stories" that set in action the development of particular truths through the representation of events, objects and experiences involved in the research process.

My writing of this thesis is a productive political process, one where I implicitly, and explicitly assert my allegiances, and strategically position my audience in ways that both reinforce, and resist disciplinary norms[13]. This work bears evidence of my "hands" as this text is "partisan, partial, incomplete, and inextricably bound to the contexts and rationales" of my social existence and the interpretations of research subjects (Altheide and Johnson 1994: 493, 487). The analysis offered here is not intended to persuade or convince readers that I have captured the most true or objective picture of introductions to sociology rather, I seek to demonstrate one understanding of how invitations to study sociology are framed. In this sense, the aim regarding the contents of this text are offered with considerable humility. This does not imply some brand of self-deprecation, rather I am merely acknowledging the incompleteness and instability of all knowledge (Altheide and Johnson 1994: 491). Thus, I offer this work as snapshot of some of the micro-level ways in which an invitation to sociology is constructed.

---

[13] One telling example of the interpretive "work" that occurs here is my choice to rely on sociological jargon that only academic audiences have access to. The jargon used here marks my "claim to membership in an identifiable research club" (Van Maanen 1988: 27) excluding individuals who do not have access to this lexicon. Even within communities familiar with this language, Game and Metcalfe explain that while specialized jargon may appear to aid in clear and direct communication between sociologists it relies upon the assumption that actors know and accept the "unspoken stories" (1996: 77) from which this shorthand derives. These seemingly precise and clear keywords are only meaningful in concert with the nuanced and variable unspoken sociological stories that I seek to analyze: I am thus reliant upon, and critical of, the discourses that comprise introductions to sociology.

To conclude this section, I would like to note three questions that bring together this epistemological background and the theoretical work I discussed in the previous chapter. These questions guide the project forward:

1. What are the key discourses and interpretations that constitute the invitations to sociology that instructor's constructed in their introductory course?

2. What situational or ideological context gives shape to instructors' interpretations?

3. What kind of invitation to sociology is constituted by the subject positions and social relationships that instructors construct?

Methods Employed

Case studies and Sample Selection

Cases for this project were drawn from two sociology departments located in a mid-sized Western Canadian city. One of the institutions is recognized as a large, well-established research-intensive university, whereas the other is a smaller university that does not house any graduate programs. These institutions were selected primarily out of convenience and my integration within the sociological community helped facilitate an informal snowball sampling of introductory sociology instructors. This process began informally in discussing my proposed research with graduate students and faculty from the two departments. From these conversations I was referred to instructors who they believed would be interested in thinking about some of my research questions and their practices as introductory sociology teachers. Three of the instructors that I

worked with were approached based on these references. To increase my sample size I then approached two other instructors based solely on the course schedule listed for the year, as they were both teaching introductory sociology at the time of my research.

Through this process of soliciting participants I was introduced to the ways in which scholarly communities are organized around "the disciplinary power to assess" (Game and Metcalfe 1996: 14). Game and Metcalfe remind me that the references I received were contingent upon one's location within departmental hierarchies and their accompanying ideological allegiances within this structure. In drawing a sample partially based on recommendations from instructors and colleagues I was introduced to the "special nastiness [of] the academic temperament" (Aoki 2008: 11). Although the rhetoric of collegiality and professionalism is prominent in mission statements and various other "introductions" (ie, course syllabi, conference advertisements) it has become very clear to me that Game and Metcalfe are correct when they claim that relationships between academic colleagues "share the jealousy, seriality and *ressentiment* that lurk in student relations" (Game and Metcalfe 1996: 15). I came to see this through off-handed comments made by colleagues and instructors: "of course, *she* would be interested!", "obviously, *he* wouldn't want to have this conversation!". In trying to understand "what subjects already know" it was important for me to try and understand the constructions participants relied upon when making these kinds of judgements; this is one way of becoming acquainted with the prevalent discourses through which they make sense of themselves and the space that they

exist in. This is relevant methodologically in terms of imagining a replication of this research: if I were to return to these same institutions in the upcoming Fall semester, and speak to the same graduate students and faculty I could not guarantee that the same instructors would be recommended to me as potential participants. Because participants had to be teaching introductory sociology at the time of my research and their participation was in part solicited based on references from others in their department, this sampling is inseparable from the particular department and institutional context at that time.

Potential participants were contacted informally via email and then we met in person to review the consent form and discuss details about the project. In total, I worked with five participants: three female and two male instructors. Participants included permanent faculty, sessional instructors, and all-but-dissertation doctoral students who had experience teaching classes with student registrations that ranged from thirty to three-hundred students. I have referred to participants only by first name pseudonyms (Morgan, Gavin, Sophie, Ben and Muriel) to ensure anonymity, and to avoid representing (or misrepresenting) their academic credentials. Pseudonyms are gender specific but were arbitrarily assigned beyond this. Certain details about instructors have also been suppressed including their age, former academic training, some personal biographical characteristics, area of specialization, and any extra-research relationships I shared with them. Information such as classroom location and class time have been suppressed to maintain anonymity as well. A sample of five participants provided sufficient diversity and depth of data to understand some of the key

36

discourses, negotiations and interpretations that shaped their construction of an invitation to sociology although the interpretations I have drawn here cannot be generalized to all introductory sociology instructors. Instead, this case study approach offers one way into thinking about invitations to the discipline as social products constituted by the same kind of social dynamics that its practitioners study. In this way, the five cases that I worked with were "instrumental" as they were used in the service of exploring a larger issue (Stake 1994: 237): they offered local level examples and interpretations that tethered my broader theoretical interest to a particular, temporally confined and concrete event. The use of case studies has also allowed me to explore my interest in-depth within the financial, temporal and pragmatic constraints of a Masters program. From a methodological perspective, Flyvbjerg argues that this local specificity is precisely the strength of case study work as researchers are able to "'close in' on real-life situations and test [broader] views directly in relation to phenomena as they unfold in practice" (2004: 428).

After meeting with, and securing the participation of five instructors I prepared to begin data collection, including: observation of the first two days of classes for two cases, up to two semi-structured personal interviews with each participant, and analysis of the course syllabus. Two of the cases were explored through all these avenues, two other cases omitted audio-recorded observation but allowed for informal observation and the fifth case involved only one interview and analysis of course documents.

<u>Observation of Introductory Lectures</u>

I began my investigation with observation of the first two days of class, influenced by Dean Dorn's claim that the first day of class is a critical "encounter among strangers" (1987: 61) where a social situation emerges and social actors perceive and position each other in particular ways. This element of my data collection is most explicitly related to Goffman's work insofar as the first day of class "represents a field of adventure laden[] with possibilities" (Dorn 1987: 62) and impossibilities for both instructors and students[14]. The first days in a sociology classroom can be seen as a site where we can witness examples of the social relations that both preoccupy sociological researchers and constitute the boundaries of this interaction. I attended and audio-recorded the first and second day of class for two cases: I had discussed in advance with participants that a statement disclosing my presence was to be read to students in the classroom as I was audio-recording the lecture. I did not introduce myself to the class; instead, I sat in the audience near the front, with my audio-recorder and fieldnotes journal, just as if I was a student. As I was not concerned with student reception during my observation periods, I did not obtain consent from individual students, though I was available after class or via email if students had any concerns they wanted

---

[14] Though there is a "first day" for courses in all disciplines this event is particularly intriguing within sociology because instructors have, and students will gain, a lexicon and analytical tools to decipher the social interactions they participate in. I do not mean to imply that we ought to (or can) rid sociology classrooms of ideological forces and dynamics of power, but that we ought to, at the very least, be cognizant of the ways in which introductions to sociology (and the discipline more broadly) are subject to the very concepts taught within its classrooms.

to discuss with me. Alternatively, instructors made it clear that students could choose to be absent during these observation days. Below are excerpts from the first day lecture transcripts quoted at length to open a discussion about how my presence may have affected the classroom atmosphere and instructor's lecturing on that day:

> …I do have to make a short announcement here: there is a Masters student who is observing my teaching today, and next class. *It's all about me though*, it has nothing really to do with you, she's focusing on me so you don't need to worry about her recording anything you say or do, or anything like that. *It's all about me…*But, *like I said, it's not a big deal, it's more about me than anything*….and it's not because I'm a bad teacher (Morgan, Lecture1, p1, emphasis mine).

> …What's really interesting about this year is that for the first two lectures: today and the next day, to tie this into research methods: I'm being studied right now… she is in no way studying you, none of your questions are really going to be at the heart of her analysis, *it's really just about me*. This lecture is being audio-recorded right now as will the next one…But again, it has nothing to do with you guys, *I'm in the hot seat, so to speak, right now* (Ben, Lecture1, p6-7, emphasis mine).

Gomm's encyclopaedic reference <u>Key Concepts in Social Research Methods</u> provides a laundry list of subject reactivity issues that may arise when conducting research with social actors, including: acquiescence bias, self-serving bias, interviewer effect and demand characteristics to name only a few. My presence in the classroom may have indeed shaped instructors' performances in any of the ways noted above however, this "reactivity" does not necessarily negate the value of my observations. In an article titled ""The Look" in Teacher's Performance

Evaluation" Peggy Ann Howard illuminates how some instructors experience observation of their teaching:

> I have been called a "model teacher". Yet, at this moment, I do not feel very sure of myself…there is an uneasiness here that I cannot put my finger on…I am bothered and I am annoyed at myself for feeling like this…I start to feel really uncomfortable, like one of those floating ducks at a shooting gallery you see in the midway – back and forth, back and forth. I feel like the target (2005: 51-53).

In planning for her observation period at the end of the week by the school principal, Howard draws on discourses about "good" teaching when she mentions that she "might put a little extra effort into Friday" and that she has "something just a little special planned to do" as "this is one of those rare opportunities to show off – to shine" (2005: 51). Howard's essay illuminates the anxiety or nervousness that instructors may have felt on observation days and some of the ways in which they may have performed differently. Considering Howard's experience, potential reactivity on the instructor's part may have resulted in a performance of one's "best behaviour" that draws on strategies, activities and presentation styles of "good" instructors. Thus, although reactivity may be regarded as fraudulent by realist standards, for the constructivist these performances contain information about what "good" instructors do, and what it means for an invitation to sociology to "shine".

Observation was completed within the first three weeks in September and audio-recordings from these classes were transcribed promptly after each meeting. Student comments were omitted from the transcription, and extended exchanges

between the instructor and students were paraphrased only for my reference. During transcription I made brief notes to myself to add nuance to the text and cues to follow up on later[15]. In addition to audio-recording two classes for two cases, I informally attended, but did not audio-record three other classes taught by other instructors. I attended these classes as if I was an undergraduate student: students were not made aware of my presence, nor were their comments or questions considered in analysis. I made brief notes while in class and then more extensive notes after observation. Though I do not have a transcript from these classes my observations helped guide subsequent interviews with these participants. As one instructor requested that I not attend their course lectures we instead conducted an interview after the first week of class to discuss how these first meetings went.

<u>Interviews</u>

By interviewing instructors I sought to learn about, and understand the ways in which they created their invitation to sociology through complicated discourses and constructions. I came to understand their sense-making activities and their pedagogical practices, but they were not merely wells of data where I could obtain information like "dollar bills found on the sidewalk" that could be "stealthily tucked away in…pockets for future use" (Van Maanen 1988: 95). In

---

[15] In listening to the transcript it was helpful to be able to recall the structure of the classroom, the "presence" the instructor had, as well as other physical details of the lecture hall. Though this issue is not discussed in my analysis the instructors I worked with did speak to how their physical classrooms constrained the kind of activities they could do in class and the dynamics of discussion as well.

reflecting on the interviewing process it is important to keep in mind that something is lost when we attempt to verbally articulate our teaching practices, and that this loss is exacerbated by my second order interpretations as a researcher. From an instructor's perspective, Susan Martin claims that the nature of this loss is as if one had "attempted to draw a three-dimensional figure on a two-dimensional surface[:] perspective is critical and much gets lost in translation" (2002: 303). Thus my aim is not to perfectly reconstruct the interpretations of instructors, but to explore some of the patterned discourses, structures of representation and material practices that I identified across the cases that I worked with.

The interviews I conducted were semi-structured in that I prepared, in advance, questions and prompts to guide our recorded conversations. These questions derived from my review of any previous transcripts, the course syllabus and my personal fieldnotes. I explicitly cited excerpts from these materials (ie. how did you come to incorporate this comment into your syllabus? When you shared this anecdote on the first day of class what were you trying to convey to students?) while also using them as "jumping-off" points for discussion regarding broader topics. Each interview guide was unique and tailored to the instructor in hopes that our meeting would not merely be a tennis match of question-answer, question-answer exchange. The specificity, and yet openness of my interview guides tethered our conversations to specifics of their introduction while still allowing for discussion about experiences, commitments and discourses that form the backdrop upon which they act.

There were valuable benefits to working with experts in the field of sociology, including our shared knowledge regarding the discipline, academic departments, features of the university, interpersonal networks and "common sense" about introductions to sociology. In a positive sense, my embeddedness within the social context of those I worked with facilitated generally smooth conversational flow: upon commencing research, I was already privy to a number of specialized discourses, norms, and corresponding jargon that instructors drew on. We were able to converse with each other in ways that appeared to be relatively clear and precise because we assumed that the other party understood the terms we used. Phrases like: "y'know what I mean…" or "y'know what I'm trying to get at…" passed between us, confident that the other was "on the same page". This assumed correspondence however, also limited the avenues that were explored because we assumed that some issues were already shared and settled. The "common sense" that participants and I shared then, both opened and closed certain doors of possibility in our interviews.

I conducted nine interviews in total between September 2009 and February 2010. These interviews were either conducted in the instructor's office or a conference room, and they lasted between one and two hours in length. All interviews were audio-recorded with the instructor's permission and transcribed shortly after the meeting. Considering my integration within the community I studied I am aware that those I worked with pride themselves on being well-spoken, professional and respectful; their career success is in fact built upon these characteristics. Because our interviews were somewhat informal and

conversational, verbatim excerpts from transcripts do not always represent these bright and articulate instructors in a most charitable light. As a means of expressing my sensitivity to the importance of professional reputation in this space, I have edited transcripts to remove colloquial utterances, such as: "like", "y'know", "um" and, "ah". Aside from these editorial changes any additions are enclosed in brackets and omissions marked with ellipses. In addition to this, participants were provided, for their review, all verbatim quotes contained within a late-stage draft of the thesis. At this point participants were given an opportunity to suppress these excerpts or suggest alternative ways of paraphrasing this data[16].

<u>Use of Syllabi as Documents</u>

With respect to existing literature on this topic, my analytical approach to syllabi is unique insofar as I have used them as artifacts that are related to my observations on the first days of class as well as comments made in interviews[17]. As one element of the introductory course, I was interested to see how the written style of the syllabus reinforced or contradicted other elements of the introduction. Rather than approaching syllabi as stand-alone documents that simply offer a tidy, literal distillation of the instructor's pedagogical and sociological investments, my

---

[16] None of the participants requested the omission of verbatim quotations or alternative paraphrasing.

[17] As course syllabi are considered to be publically accessible documents by both institutions that instructors hail from, consent from the syllabus author provided sufficient permission for me to utilize these documents in my research. However, as syllabi are considered to be in the public domain (ie. available online or from the departmental office) additional measures have been employed to avoid identifying participants. Though the names of participants and their institutions are not revealed, I have avoided long verbatim quotations from syllabi and also paraphrased certain sections to decrease the likelihood that participants can be identified through this source.

analysis draws syllabi into conversation with other data sources I utilized. I approached analysis of this document with two guiding questions:

1. How does this document confirm, challenge, or add nuance to constructions made by instructors in lecture or interview?

2. What kind of social relationships does this document imply between the instructor, students, and the discipline?

I noticed immediately that all syllabi contained some "standard" sections, including: policies regarding writing exams/missed exams/exam deferral, plagiarism and cheating/academic integrity policies, "Student Responsibilities" mandated by the institution (ie. cell phone policy, accommodations for disability, registration status, etc) and grade distribution charts. These sections were commonly "cut-and-pasted" into the syllabus, oftentimes in a different font style or size from the body of the text, or added to the back pages of the document. These "standard" elements are incorporated into my interpretation of Clients and Service Providers insofar as institutional precedents shape the kind of invitations instructors could create in the introductory course. "Unique" elements in syllabi however, demonstrate the ways in which instructors strategically play within these institutional rules and boundaries (Game and Metcalfe 1996: 25). For example, some unique sections titled: "Going Over Exams", "Email Rules", "Classroom Atmosphere", "Participation", "Expectations of course work" and "Advice" were of particular interest to me. Syllabi were collected from all instructors very early on and I have returned to review them numerous times throughout the research process. Analysis of this document was done by hand: as

I reviewed this document many times, I made notes in the margins, highlighted certain sections, and wrote fieldnotes regarding ideas that I wanted to follow-up on in interviews. As the syllabus is written by the instructor (in reference to particular institutional constraints) I approached this document as a kind of roadmap that I hoped gestured towards some components of their invitation to sociology. Rather than presenting a mere content analysis of this document, my analytical approach focuses on how the address and tone of the syllabus help us think about the social positions and relationships introduced in an invitation to sociology.

The questions that I used to analyze syllabi acted as a general roadmap for my analysis of all data collected. In working with all the data I had collected it was imperative for me to "ask":

1. What kind of student is being spoken to here?

2. What kind of position does the instructor occupy here?

3. What kinds of invitation is occurring here?

Interpretation and the Double Hermeneutic

In working with the data I collected, I hoped to explore the "systems of representations, social and material practices, laws of discourses, and ideological effects" (Schwandt 1994: 125) that factor into the invitation to sociology that instructors offer in the introductory course. My goal was to work towards understanding these factors while attending to the ways in which instructors are "particular actors in particular places, at particular times, [who] fashion meaning out of events and phenomena through prolonged, complex, processes of social

46

action involving history, language, and action" (Schwandt 1994: 118). Considering this, as a researcher I sought to excavate the naturalness of their invitation to sociology by asking questions about "how what is, has come to be" and "where [instructor's] frames of reference come from" (Kincheloe and McLaren 1994: 154). To accomplish this, I came to manage my data as if this information were sets of conversations between instructors and myself. I first tried to understand their interpretations of their practice and I then began to draw connections across cases to identify patterns that contained and organized the interpretations that instructors offered me. This process of sense-making involved reading and re-reading my fieldnotes, and interview and lecture transcripts many times, making notes each time I reviewed them. During this time I was looking for a redundancy or repetitiveness that would signal to me a shared discourse among those I worked with. Considering this, the patterns I sought to identify in my data do not exist at a literal level (ie. how many times did the word "critical" appear) rather, I was looking for discursive patterns of meaning that speak to the nature of the social relationships that constitute an invitation to sociology. This is the second stage of Giddens' double hermeneutic insofar as I have worked with the first-order interpretations of instructors to develop my second-order interpretations. If my interpretive work attends to the context, detail and nuance of first-order interpretations, the study participants should recognize the appropriateness and explicitness of the first-order which, in conversation, appears as part of the taken for granted. The instructors I worked with should, upon reading the second order interpretation, experience an 'ah-ha' reaction. The four

second-order interpretations I have developed synthesize data from all cases and are labelled according to a single phrase or word that kept returning to me as I worked with the interpretations from instructors. My interpretations however, do not contain the entirety of data collected, nor do I intend to present them as the "truth" about invitations to sociology in the introductory course. Rather, these interpretations tell a certain story that I have cobbled together based on the interpretations of instructors and existing literature that I found helpful for my own understanding.

General Reflections on Researcher-Participant Relations

The interpersonal "work" I engaged in when working with instructors composes a significant part of this research experience. While I cannot exhaustively discuss all elements that shaped the relationships I developed with participants, I would like to discuss some of my research experiences to provide readers with a background upon which my analysis rests. Firstly, it is important to note that when I began this research I imagined there was a strict, hierarchical division between instructors and myself; I was a "student", wholly different from the "instructors" within the departments I sampled from. As a new researcher and inexperienced teaching assistant I felt distinctly subordinate compared to those I worked with. For this reason, the first meetings that I had with instructors were nerve-wracking: I prepared and rehearsed thoughtful answers for the "killer" questions I imagined they would ask, but rarely did. Nevertheless, I spent much emotional energy throughout this project second-guessing my presentation of self

as well as my own interpretations of the data I collected, reluctant to trust my own interpretations over those of the experts I was working with.

Nevertheless, one of the most rewarding aspects of conducting this research has been a positive introduction to the kinds of collegiality and respect that I had been searching for in an academic community. Seemingly tangential to the research project, these instructors offered reassurance that there was room for me, and my research interests in the academy. Thus, though it was initially difficult for me to grapple with how instructors could feel like they were "in the hot seat", this difficulty derived from my reluctance to refigure my position in the credentialized hierarchy as someone who is no longer strictly a student, but some kind of hybridized mix between student and teacher. I experienced this relational shift in conversations with instructors whenever we mentioned some kind of departmental gossip. Though I never disclosed comments from interviews with other participants, I did not cut off conversations that would be regarded as gossip because I found that participants sometimes needed a referential subject (or straw man) in order to articulate their own position. More often these stories or myths about others acted as important avenues through which participants came to articulate their own interpretations regarding the invitation to sociology they constructed.

Considering the positive experiences I had working with participants, I was disappointed when Gavin was unable to continue participating after our first face-to-face interview. He has confirmed that he wishes to still be included in this research, however it is unfortunate that we were not able to complete additional

interviews. Between negotiating multiple professional responsibilities and managing one's personal life, I can understand how participation in my project could not be made a priority for Gavin. Even Ben disclosed that he participated, in part, out of "goodwill" or some kind of obligation as there was no tangible remuneration or reward for participating (Interview 2, p33).

Lastly, in working with instructor's I also came to informally understand the kind of relationship between their teaching and identity. This became explicit to me in an interview with Morgan where she remarked that teaching is a personal practice that is tied to personal beliefs and self-identity:

> …teaching is so personal, it's so personal…talking about it, like you even asking me about discipline or authority in the classroom, like, *that makes a person look deep inside*…what kind of person do you want to be? What kind of class do you want to have? … it is so personal, it would be like talking about your relationships. When you start talking about it, you are exposed: you are on the line!...you can't separate your teaching style from your personality, or who you are (Interview 1, p25-26).

 Palmer echoes this sentiment explaining "we teach who we are" because our identity and integrity as individuals is intimately tied up with our teaching practices and the kind of instructors we recognize ourselves to be (1998: 2). If we accept Palmer's claim here, then conversations about teaching necessarily invoke ideas about the selves of teachers, in a way that can become incredibly "risky stuff in a profession that fears the personal and seeks safety in the technical, the distant, the abstract" (Palmer 1998: 12). Doug Aoki quotes John Donahue to

remind us of the "special nastiness" that characterizes some relationships in the academy:

> the image I have of academia is one of a place filled with tremendously bright, insecure people. They do have bad glasses. And atrocious people skills. They are distracted, yet vicious when aroused…the nerds have filed teeth, like cannibals (2008: 11).

The instructors I worked with spoke about the cannibalistic scenes they had witnessed in the academy, thus when conversations shifted into "risky" personal territory, I felt honoured and privileged to bear witness to their stories. I have reminded myself throughout this research process that "no good purpose is served by saying what bastards we [/they] all are" (Ohliger 2009: 178) and instead hope that the proceeding analysis demonstrates a commitment to "seeing clearly the nature of the system[s] we are a willing, or unwilling, part of (2009: 178), and the ways in which we can "play" with existing discourses and sociologies (Game and Metcalfe 1996: 25). In pursuing this research I in no way intend to claim that I occupy a view from nowhere; I have however become more aware of and better equipped to assess the games that I play as a sociological subject.

Chapter 4
Discursively Positioned Students

> We talk about research as a department, as a discipline, [but] how often do you sit down and talk about teaching? Like sharing. I don't sit down with [an instructor] and ask what [their] doing in [their] classes! We don't sit down and talk about assignments, and [our] struggles … we don't do this kind of stuff often enough (Morgan, Interview 1, p23).

In my research, I found that while there may not be many conversations about teaching per se, instructors freely shared their interpretations regarding the students they were inviting to sociology in their introductory sociology course. By focusing on constructions of students here I am suggesting that one does not enter a classroom that already contains students rather, instructors construct the kind of students they imagine in their course and the invitation they construct is tailored to this audience. Building upon Goffman's theory regarding social actors' articulation of the situation, in this chapter I will offer two second order interpretations of students conceived as constitutive elements of instructors' invitations to sociology.

In beginning my analysis with a discussion of introductory sociology students I repeat a dynamic that I identified in our interviews. As interviews progressed with instructors I felt a shift in the content and style of engagement from impersonal to more personal issues as our conversation progressed. Although conversations may have begun somewhat impersonally, for example we talked about students, departmental precedents or institutional constraints as interviews progressed, our conversations shifted to more personal territory:

instructors shared stories of their own educational biography or tensions they negotiate in identity construction. Though this shift occurred differently and to different degrees with each instructor, this dynamic has informed my decision to first present my interpretaion of the students that instructors spoke of and then proceed in the next chapter to discuss two interpretaions of the discursive positions that instructors occupied[18].

Clients

My interpretation of the Client that instructors spoke of emerged as I began to understand the institutional and departmental precedents they met by virtue of existing in the contemporary university. As I hope to highlight the situated agency of instructors, it is important to note that those I worked with felt significantly limited by neoliberal discourses of the contemporary university that hail students as Clients of the institution. Ben spoke to this in interview, remarking that sociology instructors work in an "educational system [that] is all about getting a good job" (Interview 2, p13) and producing efficient and qualified employees. For Ben, students entering the introductory course are *already* positioned as Clients, regardless of an instructor's particular practices. He

---

[18] The language I use to reconstruct instructor's interpretations of Clients and Engaged Learners may, at times, seem to imply that these are *real* figures or subjects that I and instructors encountered. As a practice in constructivist research this is not my intention. However, because instructors spoke of their students in predominantly realist terminology, I have found the semantic translation into constructivist writing conventions to be somewhat cumbersome to work with. Thus, I invite readers to bear in mind the students that I have reconstructed here are indeed social constructions and I do not intend to make any claims regarding their *real* existence or attempts to *verify* whether the interpretations of instructors correspond with any *real* students in their classrooms.

expressed frustration with the increasing instrumentality that has permeated institutions of higher education remarking that "school[s] …use the term[] Client at times to refer to students" (Ben, Interview 2, p13), making this a dominant construction that shapes the invitation to sociology that instructors could create[19]. Indeed, Pocklington and Tupper claim that as Clients, students enter the contemporary university "consciously set…on a specific career path" with practical aims, seeking from the university "facts, lore, know-how, and polish to pursue successful careers" (2002: 58-59). Instructors interpreted Clients as figures who exist in reference to a discourse of entitlement that justifies the demands they place on the introductory sociology instructor and their course. Instructors referred to this discourse of entitlement as a way of speaking to unrealistic, inappropriate or problematic expectations and demands of the Client that are fostered by broader institutional discourses. In describing Clients, instructors spoke of this discourse of entitlement in two different ways: firstly, Clients were described as goal-oriented, instrumentally motivated and demanding consumers who desire an efficient transfer of knowledge through coursework. Alternatively, the Client was also interpreted as one who, if distracted or unsatisfied in the classroom, would engage in disruptive practices during lecture, expressing their entitlement to use lecture time as they desire. I will first discuss this latter manifestation of disruptive behaviour from Clients in the classroom as an

---

[19] Despite my negative depiction of Clients, some may argue that it is precisely this constructed subject position that allows contemporary post-secondary institutions to even function.

important element that contributed to instructors' frustration and antagonistic feelings towards this discursive subject position.

By acting out, and disrupting the instructor's lecture, the unsatisfied Client expressed their displeasure publically. Instructors explained that this behaviour could include Clients doing things such as: chatting with neighbours during lecture, texting on their cell phone, listening to music, surfing the internet or watching movies on their laptops. One of the most outrageous examples I heard was from Ben who once saw two students in his lecture class watching a movie; huddled in front of a laptop together, these students were laughing at the action they were watching on the screen, disregarding the social norms involved in attending a lecture. I came to understand that anecdotes like this significantly impacted instructor's frustrations with their interpretation of the Client in their classroom. They often used emotionally charged language to describe these situations, which I speculate may speak to the symbolic or psychological significance of these events insofar as they decrease instructors' tolerance or generosity towards all those they have interpreted as Clients. Furthermore, instructors spoke of feeling disrespected by Clients in lecture, bullied by their demands or ignored entirely by disruptive Clients whom, they believe, are not satisfied with the product or experience they are receiving in the classroom. In explaining to me her understanding of disruptive behaviour from Clients, Sophie expressed that these students are simply not "ready" for post-secondary education:

> ...there are always students that you can give them
> all kinds of advice [for how to succeed] and they
> don't listen to it... they're not motivated...they

> probably don't even want to be there. They're not
> grown-up, they don't know what they want in life.
> It doesn't matter what you do…they need to go
> away for a couple years and then come back
> (Interview 1, p5).

However, beyond individual maturity or motivation, other instructors spoke of disruptive Clients as symptomatic of institutional discourses that privilege Client needs and demands above those of course instructors. Morgan interpreted the disruptive behaviour of Clients as an assertion of their entitlement: "…I'm paying you to teach me, I can sit here" (Interview 1, p18) and do whatever I want. This is a most striking projection regarding the thought processes of students as it summarizes how the classroom has become a "filling station" (McHugh 1992: 108) or a service site that Clients visit to receive knowledge for instrumental ends. In talking about his interpretation of disruptive Clients, Ben described a frustration that was also echoed by other instructors:

> …the problem is you start to realize at some point
> that no matter what you do Johnny Jackass is still
> going to be talking in the back corner, screwing
> around on his laptop and that's the part that really
> becomes tiring, I mean why do I try doing this?
> (Interview 2, p18).

In saying "no matter what you do…" Ben implies that he has amended his invitation to sociology in response to, or anticipation of, disruptive Clients, but to little avail: without institutional support from their departments and institutions, disruptive students remained in their classrooms.

Instructors' understanding of Clients becomes more defined when we make strange the volume and detail of administrative and bureaucratic policies,

procedures and expectations included in syllabi. Syllabi typically contained brief course objectives or descriptions, the lecture schedule, reading list, and guidelines regarding written assignments or in-class tests. However, aside from these sections the majority of the document contained institutional precedents and administrative details regarding how the course was to run: an informational "brochure" intended to inform potential Clients about the "agreement" they were entering into. Across all syllabi the presence of institutional administrative and bureaucratic policies was consistent, this material covered such issues such as: plagiarism, missed exams, exam deferral and student responsibilities that are campus-wide precedents and matters of official university policy. These institutional precedents were often "cut-and-pasted" in a font style different from the body of the document or appended to the end of the document. In addition to the "required" components, "unique" policies were noted on syllabi, some of these issues included: the format of exam review sessions, how to book (and prepare for) meetings with the instructor, how students can review their written exams, how and where exam grades are posted, email etiquette, note-taking in class, availability of online notes, lecture style, classroom atmosphere, guidelines for written assignments including submission and formatting issues, details regarding distribution and weight of exams and, how participation grades were to be assessed.

As I began this project focused on invitations to sociology as a unique event that occurs in the university, I found it rather striking that substantial portions of syllabi are not "unique" to sociology at all. Rather, it may be

57

important to consider how an invitation to sociology may not be so much different from an invitation to economics, political science or biology insofar as all instructors are required to include this material in their syllabi and uphold institutional precedents. As a way of thinking about my interpretation of Clients, we can look to Pocklington and Tupper's discussion about how all students undergo a process of social adaptation in post-secondary education where they experience a "shock of anonymity" and must "adjust[] to the impersonality and other peculiarities of university routine" that render them anonymous among a sea of other ciphered objects (2002: 59). In many cases students are literally reduced to ciphers within their institution (ie. identification numbers, course grades, percentile ranks). Instructors confront (and participate in) this particular institutional context that necessarily places limitations on the ways in which they can imagine the students they are charged with introducing to sociology. Thus, although these elements of syllabi may be naturalized discourses of consumerism and noeliberalism in the university they do participate in the construction of an invitation to sociology.

Firstly, the instructors I worked with described the rules and policies in the syllabi as one of the few self-protective strategies they could employ in response to the Clients their university served. Considering this, we can see instructors' meticulous contract-like review of this document as an act of self-protection against their interpretations of demanding and manipulative Clients in their classes. At some points during my observation it did indeed seem as if instructors were propositioning a business deal to potentially powerful Clients: outlining in

detail each party's responsibilities and obligations. Muriel in fact, described her syllabus to me in these precise terms, as her syllabus outlines the acceptable boundaries for conduct in the course and it functions as "a contract with the students", one where she "makes it very clear how far they can push [her]" (Interview 1, p35). Morgan discussed the syllabus with students on the first day of class in the same terms, sharing with students that she had been told that "the syllabus for a course is like a contract that you and I are getting into" (Lecture 1, p14) and thus spent a significant portion of the first class reviewing it. Morgan explained that by outlining syllabi content in such detail in the first class she hoped to decrease the likelihood that she, or students would encounter any "weird surprises halfway through the term, so no one can say "well, I never knew that…I didn't know I was supposed to do reflection papers!"" (Lecture 1, p14). This extensive review of course policies and rules in the syllabus thus functioned to protect instructors from their constructions of Clients while also decreasing any ambiguity that these students may exploit for their own instrumental ends.

Secondly, administrative details in syllabi (ie. weighting and date of exams, guidelines for written assignments, style of lecture, note-taking in class or availability of notes online) also participate in the "course-shopping" that instructors believed Clients engaged in over the first weeks of class. Most simply, instructors spoke about course-shopping as the process by which students sample courses (attending the first few lectures) before deciding which ones they will register in for the semester. Course-shopping appeared in my observations as both Ben and Morgan spoke tentatively in their first classes regarding student

registration; their use of phrases such as "if you choose to stay in the course", or "just so you know what you're getting into with this course" speak to their awareness that the class would have, what Muriel tactfully called, a "shifting membership" for the first few weeks (Interview 1, p16). To think about course-shopping as a strategic practice of Clients, Peter McHugh suggests that Clients approach coursework as little more than instrumental barriers to be overcome in order for them to obtain their degree (1992). The instructors I worked with seemed to agree with McHugh's assessment of students: their invitations to sociology came to resemble contract-like agreements, in which the syllabus was a key component of the business negotiation.

Related to the instrumental motivations that instructors imagined students had, those I worked with expressed concern that the university has become a place where Clients can demand courses that best suit their immediate needs (ie. course credits) and wants (ie. optional attendance) disregarding the traditional valuation of intellectual rigour in academia. McHugh argues that Clients of the university have career aspirations, but they "do not have intellectual aspirations, nor do they recognize the inherent value of intellectual work" (1992: 108). Those I worked with felt similarly, insofar as they interpreted Clients as figures who see courses as little more than filling stations where they expect access to sociological knowledge at their convenience. Applying this metaphor to my research, instructors spoke about their belief that Clients expect attendance optional courses. By optional attendance, I mean to describe a situation where the majority of the course could essentially be completed via correspondence through a course

60

website that makes lecture notes available to registered students. Generally, those I worked with were resistant to structuring their courses as if they could be completed via correspondence. To extend the filling station metaphor: if a classroom is simply for filling Clients with knowledge, then a flexible "self-serve" transaction would be the most efficient and consistent means of achieving this. Though only one of the instructors I worked with took attendance in class that would count towards student's final grades, others tried to ensure attendance by not making their notes available online and reminding students that anecdotes or discussions held in class may be included on their final exam. Other expectations that instructors felt characterized Clients, and the "filling station" metaphor, included: demands for elaborate powerpoint presentations, a "traditional" encyclopaedic textbook (as opposed to a collection of articles or non-fiction pieces) and a set schedule regarding elements of assessment (ie. no participation component or "pop" quizzes). All of these expectations that instructors felt the Client had reinforce an image of the classroom as a filling station where an efficient transfer of knowledge from the professor to Clients is to occur. Thus, instructors interpreted Client engagement with instructors, the course and the university as being guided by their desire for an efficient, unambiguous, and consistent transfer of knowledge that leads towards securing a degree.

Although the Client that she had discursively constructed would prefer a relationship characterized by an efficient transfer of knowledge, Sophie dangled an attendance "carrot" that impacts students' final grade[20]:

---

[20] It is relevant to note here that although Sophie's syllabus contained many of the

> …this is attendance, it's kind of a little carrot that's dangled at them…I always explain at the beginning of their course: "the reason I have this is to honour the students who do come regularly to class. It's not so much about punishing those that don't but it's about giving a gift to those who do".… Who do what they're supposed to be doing anyways (Interview 1, p3, emphasis mine).

For those I worked with, attendance in lecture was indeed something they thought students were *supposed to be doing anyways*, but felt that demanding Clients within their classes held a contrary position. Ben was attuned to the optional attendance expectation that he felt Clients carry, and in our interview explained how he has witnessed this development:

> …I find that…the more other instructors put their notes online and stuff like that, students start to treat these as correspondence courses where: "Why come to the lecture if I can just download the overheads after?!"…I always have students complaining – one of the common complaints is that: "he doesn't put notes online" right…so this year…in my intro that I did for 100, I actually brought this up: "if you're just taking this to download notes, cram the night before and pass, go to a different section, because I'm not going to give you the notes" (Interview 2, p8).

---

same elements I saw in other cases, her engagement with this text on the first day of class differed significantly compared to Ben and Morgan. Although her syllabus shared the same legalistic language and bureaucratic protocol, she did not review the syllabus as a legal contract on the first day rather, she spent the majority of her first class lecture sharing information about her own life history and gesturing towards some of the sociological connections that could be made to it. This observation is relevant insofar as Sophie's approach demonstrates that one can appropriate or "play" with this construction of students. Sophie is aware of the construction of Clients, however she brings to light how one can creatively resist or respond to the expectations one believes those in this subject position hold.

Whether or not students *really* have these demands, instructors' interpreted the Client as being focused on the instrumentality of the relationship that this discursive position necessitates. Though I've offered only one example here regarding optional attendance, instructors broached many other issues they felt that the Client they constructed would object to including, for example: written exams or assignments[21].

In conclusion, the Client that instructors hailed in their syllabi and lecture, and spoke of in interviews plays an integral role in constituting the invitation to sociology offered. As instructors projected that Clients desire an efficient, unambiguous service transaction, I began to consider how invitations to sociology may actually act as an introduction to the variety of instrumental and bureaucratic relationships (to knowledge, to the instructor, to the institution) that constitute the contemporary university. Insofar as the instructors I worked with constructed students as Clients who visit filling stations, I would like to suggest that an invitation to sociology can, in part, act to define the parameters of this particular filling station and the social relationships permissible within this space. In this

---

[21] Though instructors expressed their preference for written assignments and exams (pending class size) Sophie noted that her students tend to lack confidence regarding their ability to complete written assignments and in some cases even resistant as, in this role, students have come to expect that they will be told exactly what to do (Interview 1, p12). Muriel expressed frustration in talking about her discovery that some students in fact often lack the conceptual skills necessary to read guidelines for a written assignment and put them into practice (Interview 1, p21). On the first day of class Morgan tried to "pitch" written assignments to students in a positive light, anticipating that they would not appreciate this "opportunity" she was presenting them with. The Client construction implies an efficient transfer of knowledge that students receive from the instructor, thus written assignments complicate this exchange by requiring more independent effort and judgement.

way, an invitation to sociology acts as an invitation to institutional norms and policies that necessitate the discursive category of "client", and exist before an instructor even begins to construct their particular invitation to the discipline. Ironically, this kind of invitation initiates students into a subject position and social relationships that demonstrate many of the characteristics Weber used to describe modern bureaucracy, though at this stage of the course, Weber's theory has not yet been explicitly introduced to students.

Engaged Learners

> Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers *and* students (Freire 2008: 72, emphasis in original).

Overwhelmingly, instructors were frustrated by and struggled with their interpretations of Clients in their introductory course. However, twisted in with this rather negative construction were contrary ideas or hopes that instructors held about another, more positive construction of students in their introductory course. My interpretation of Engaged Learners derives from instructor's understanding that there are students who are not only interested in sociology but also knowledgeable figures in the classroom as well. Jane Tompkins offers a way of thinking about this interpretation that I have found very helpful. Tompkins argues that these kind of students are capable and motivated to work with the course material, if the instructor will just "get out of the way" and allow them to feel their own authority. She writes:

> You have to be willing to give up your authority, and the sense of identity and prestige that come with it, for the students to be able to feel their own authority. To get out of the students' way, the teacher has to learn how to get out of her own way. To not let her ego call the shots all the time…(1996: 147).

In his 2004 presidential address to the American Sociological Association, Michael Burawoy also helps clarify my interpretation of Engaged Learners who can "feel their own authority" and offer valuable knowledge to the classroom. Contrary to interpretations of Client consumers who are ignorant of sociology upon arrival, demanding and instrumentally-driven, Burawoy argues that students can actually be thought of as "carriers of… rich lived experience that [instructors can] elaborate into a deeper self-understanding of the historical and social contexts that have made them who they are" (2007: 30). Burawoy's description here relates to Mills' conceptualization of the sociological imagination as he goes on to argue that: "with the aid of our grand traditions of sociology, we turn [students] private troubles into public issues…by engaging their lives, not suspending them; starting from where they are, not from where we are" (2007: 31). I began this research intrigued by Burawoy's argument for public sociology and I was anxious to see how, or if, the relationships Burawoy imagines possible could manifest in institutions that instructors described as increasingly bureaucratic and consumer-oriented. Thus, in observing lectures and conducting interviews for this research, I was particularly attuned to the ways in which instructors interpreted their students as being knowledgeable social actors whose personal experiences were linked to sociological course content. Interestingly,

65

while instructors were quite vocal in interviews about their construction of Clients, I found most evidence for the construction of Engaged Learners in their practices within the classroom. Thus, I conclude this section with a brief discussion of how instructors spoke about written assignments to refine the kind of invitation to sociology that I suggest accompanies the notion of students as Engaged Learners.

To begin most simply, Engaged Learners were constructed as knowledgeable in terms of their awareness of the discipline upon beginning the course. Morgan noted that today more students know what sociology is when they enter her classroom as they've been at least exposed to a few of the terms through high school courses (Interview 1, p6). Gavin echoed this arguing that introductory students actually know a small amount about sociology when they enter his class and "have formed reflections about the discipline" based on information from friends, the course description, and other resources (Interview 1, p2), he remarked:

> …they're not dumb students, so when I'm talking about Marxism, they sometimes have interesting questions and solutions and…[and they] start using concepts…it is very interesting (Gavin, Interview 1, p5).

As Gavin employed his interpretaion of Engaged Learners he asked in his first day of class for students to share what they think sociology is about. He was however, clear that in asking this question, he did not just want students to parrot the text's definition rather, he called students to share their own thoughts and thus asked: "what is sociology for you? Forget about the text! Forget about their

66

definition of sociology. What is your image of sociology?" (Interview 1, p2).

Sophie also felt that students entered the classroom with some sociological

knowledge, even if this was just in terms of an awareness of social issues:

> … every year the students are more and more aware
> of social issues…they're more aware of
> environmental issues…they're more likely to already
> be critical of the oil sands, [and] already be critical of
> the conservative government, so this is wonderful, to
> me! Kind of grassroots, y'know at the younger
> generation level…(Interview 2, p10).

Interpreting students as knowledgeable participants in the classroom, Gavin

hoped that they would apply this kind of critical thinking to challenge or critique

the material he presented. In Gavin's understanding of Engaged Learners, these

students could offer valuable insights in the form of critique even without, or

precisely because of, their minimal exposure to sociology. He described how he

invites this kind of engagement in the classroom:

> In the first class I mention to them: I will be giving
> lectures, some slideshows, and other stuff but we can
> also have [extra discussion] time…you can put up your
> hand at any time-and talk about, explain a topic, you can
> challenge me…sometimes I make a statement and ask:
> "how many disagree with me?"…I make very clear that
> my opinion is not out of bounds, you can critique it, it is
> not free from ideology, and it is political (Interview 1,
> p4).

Desiring to create a classroom that capitalizes on the knowledge that students

enter his class with, Gavin hoped to think with Engaged Learners to try and

create a classroom that is an "open space for debate", inviting student comments

and opinions regardless as to whether he agrees or disagrees with them (Interview

1, p6). Though Gavin's classroom may still be "haunted by the architects"

67

(Meighan and Siraj-Blatchford 2003: 70) of traditional pedagogical and sociological models, he interpreted Engaged Learners to have the capability to share their knowledge and "talk back" to the instructor and his ancestors.

An interpretation of Engaged Learners also appeared in Morgan's class lectures as she spoke about new students as sociologists who just lack formal training:

> … at some level I do believe that we're all sociologists,…You may not be trained yet to use this official sociological perspective as I've been calling it… [but] if you go to the gym and you're keenly aware of gym etiquette, of how things unravel, of how you behave and interact in a gym setting, you're doing sociology. If you go out with your friends on a Friday night, and find yourself observing the dynamics that occur in a club…you really are doing sociology: you're interested in human interaction. So that's what I mean when I say that we're all kind of sociologists at some level (Lecture 2, p2).

In this passage students are positioned as informed social actors who already participate in norms about gym etiquette and possess common sense about social dynamics at the bar. Morgan also interpreted Engaged Learners to have knowledge of socially-constructed figures such as the "re-gifter" or the "double-dipper" made popular by the sitcom *Seinfeld*. She in fact, likened sociology to *Seinfeld* for, just as Jerry Seinfeld "picked on quirky little things, character types, issues that people face in living in the big city of New York" sociology also "touch[es] on issues related to friendship…relationships, and family… pick[ing] up [on] the[] things we take for granted (Lecture 2, p9). Morgan hailed Engaged Learners in her class by situating sociology in reference to the seemingly

68

mundane "everydayness" of student's lives and inviting them to: "take things, niggly details... that we [tend to just] kind of just gloss over" and "expose…them for what they [are]", that is, specific social constructions about the world (Lecture 2, p10). Sophie also felt that Engaged Learners enter the classroom knowing about some of the topics they will cover in class, though on a day-to-day basis they may not think about these issues:

> ...I often think back to when I was eighteen or nineteen, I knew squat about politics, I didn't have any interests: the highlight of my day was: "what new lipstick will I buy?...There is this gorgeous guy I want him to ask me out on a date!" so…that's the raw material that I'm working with, [but] I still can do a lot with that raw material. I just need to enter that brain, get that brain to start thinking a little more critically…so it is possible (Interview 1, p31).

In this passage Sophie essentially argues that the raw material that students come to class with can be valuable in the introductory course so her challenge is to turn student's concerns about lipstick choices and dating into sociological discussions. Similarly, Morgan sought to show Engaged Learners in her class how they could use a simple social encounter as a starting point for sociological inquiry:

> … walk past the homeless person on the street and don't blink, don't even think twice about it…Sociology…makes that homeless person an object of inquiry: "Why? Why is he or she here? What does he or she go through on a day-to-day basis? Why did I just walk by and pretend he or she didn't exist?" (Lecture 2, p10)

By using everyday examples such as these, instructors utilize the valuable knowledge they believe Engaged Learners possess; in this way, instructors interpreted Engaged Learners as not simply "empty vessels into which we pour

69

our mature wine, [or] blank slates upon which we inscribe our knowledge" (Burawoy 2007: 30). Instead, instructors interpreted Engaged Learners as social actors who possess theories about how the world works and they thus aspired to connect sociology to the informal social theories they already rely on. Ben capitalizes on this student knowledge in an exercise where he pretends to be "Ben the Alien". To "tap into" the knowledge that students already have about the social world, he asks students to explain how one would "pick up" someone at the bar. Pretending to be completely ignorant of social rules or norms about this process, he has students articulate even the most basic principles of this interaction:

> Where should I say "hello" to people? Should I just saunter into either the men's or women's washroom "Hey! How ya doing? I'm Ben!"… Buy them a drink? Booze, the great social equalizer! … Booze, okay right, so buy them a drink…[actually] I kind of slipped up because I assumed that it was an alcoholic beverage…I won't come out with a big jug of kool-aid: "Hey, who wants some? It's low sugar!" (Lecture 2, p2-3).

Though the example may seem goofy, this exercise "works" because it relies upon an interpretation of Engaged Learners as figures who already possess knowledge and theories about the social world. These students, as Engaged Learners, offer the "raw data" needed for sociological analysis. In summarizing his example, Ben explains:

> So I'm dancing, I'm drinking, I'm conversing, okay. Now all of this stuff, goes into this thing we call introducing yourself, or meeting someone, or picking up, okay? Okay, fascinating, you guys have a wealth of knowledge in your head…so the

70

first time you walked into a bar you didn't just run right to the centre and go wild, right? you had to [think]: "how does this thing work? I've never been here before." You talk to people, you learn, you converse, this is observation…and this is a vital part to doing sociology, believe it or not (Lecture 2, p3-4).

Muriel also relies upon this construction of Engaged Learners as she uses current events and popular culture examples to work through course content. When I informally attended one of her introductory classes I saw this strategy in action as she used two deodorant sticks to demonstrate gender norms and gendered inequality. After discussing how differences in colour, scent and logos on the two products reinforce some basic stereotypes and gender norms she then offered her sales receipt with the prices of each item: the men's deodorant was of greater total volume compared to the women's one however, the women's one was significantly more expensive. In this example she starts with a product that students are familiar with, has them brainstorm about how gender is represented by these products, and then helps them to "unpack" and add nuance to some of the social meanings that they may already be aware of[22].

In these examples, student knowledge is positioned as a starting point for sociological inquiry and in using their interpretation of Engaged Learners, instructors approached social theory as something that we all have licence to work

---

[22] Muriel also had a first day activity where she links interview data that students collect from each other to broader social issues. For example, she talks about why or why not some students went on vacation over the summer: how is it that some people have time and money to go on vacation? Did students pay for the trip? Did their parents? Did they have to work in the summer to pay for tuition? Or care for children or elderly parents?

with[23]. For example, Ben explained to his class that theory, though it may be difficult at times, is something that we all use to navigate our lives:

> … In a way you guys gave me a theory about how to introduce myself to people in a bar, you observe people do it, you piece observations together, hold them together in a coherent manner and told me: "Here's what you do, here's how that social situation works." You're doing theory already. So don't get flipped out about the fact that we're starting with this kind of stuff (Lecture 2, p5-6)

Constructed as Engaged Learners, instructors understood students as already carrying certain theories about the world and sociologically formalizing this way of thinking "enables [them] to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life" while allowing one to "grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society" (Mills 2000: 5-6).

Instructors interpreted Engaged Learners as the kind of student for whom sociological tools gained in the introductory course could be folded back onto their lives in ways that shape their theories about social life. They described short reflective assignments as one way of facilitating Engaged Learners relationship to the course and sociological material. Instructors discussed these assignments in their review of the course syllabus, and elaborated about their understanding of

---

[23] In thinking about students as knowledgeable figures, Kristin Ross argues that we make intellectual equality a precondition, rather than an achievement of, education. She inquires: "What would it mean to make equality a *presupposition* rather than a goal, a *practice* rather than a reward situated firmly in some distant future so as to all the better explain its present infeasibility?" (1991: xix). In recognizing the experiences, expertise and personal troubles of students, this kind of sociology becomes a set of practices that start from a certain kind of intellectual equality between instructors and their students, though the instructor remains one who can help students navigate this space.

them in interview as well. Although only three of the five instructors I worked with used short essays in their classes, the ways in which they spoke about these assignments helps highlights the kind of engagement and intellectual licence that instructors associated with their interpretation of Engaged Learners.

Most generally, these reflective assignments required students to analyze an example from their life using sociological concepts and theories introduced in the class. As a way of reconciling existing knowledge and materials introduced in the introductory course, Sophie described her short written assignments as an opportunity for Engaged Learners to practice sociology in a "toe in the water" way (Interview 1, p8) by using sociological concepts to analyze a personal example. The length of these assignments ranged from one to three pages and were not worth more than ten percent of the final course grade. In discussing her understanding of the short essays in her course, Muriel interpreted this kind of assignment as a challenging, but rewarding, invitation to Engaged Learners:

> …I hate multiple choice…I think what [writing] does is that: learning is a process of using all of your senses…if you don't put out your understanding of sociology, chances are you won't get to express [your thoughts]…[By] putting [ideas] in your own words, you get to think through [them], you have to work through it! …I think [writing is] important in that sense…for creativity, because you ought to be able to go beyond just expressing what's read, [and try] to apply it to something (Interview 1, p19).

By assigning short, reflective assignments, instructors felt that they were creating an opportunity for Engaged Learners to think through and struggle with material

they have encountered in the course. In writing about the wonder of the writing process, Van Manen offers a similar insight:

> …symbolic scribbles have the effect of mesmerizing consciousness, evoking worlds, insights, emotions, understandings…as words draw us and carry us away, they seem to open up a space: a temporal dwelling space where we may have…"realizations" that we never imagined possible…wonder is that moment of being when one is overcome by awe or perplexity – such as when something familiar has turned profoundly unfamiliar, when our gaze has been drawn by the gaze of something that stares back at us (2005: 4-5).

Van Manen's description here also aligns well with the critical thinking that characterizes Morgan's hope for Engaged Learners and Ben's articulation of the beauty and challenge of sociological analysis:

> If I could summarize my one goal for this class…[it] is to get looking at these common-sense [and] taken-for-granted realities more carefully: Looking at them more closely [and] reflecting on them critically, questioning the world around you (Morgan, Lecture 1, p3).

> …we're part of the object we study…This makes it very difficult to do social research when we just assume the way we live is completely natural. You need a way to branch out of that kind of perspective, a way of seeing the world as natural, as given, as necessary, okay? And break out of your own culture and begin to see the world in a different way (Ben, Lecture 1, p7).

In assigning short written work, instructors interpreted the Engaged Learner as one who is not merely an instrumental collector of sociological facts, but a knowledgeable social actor who is motivated to connect classroom material to their own experiences. The connection that instructor's hoped would occur for

74

Engaged Learners was described in one of their textbooks as a process of "self-discovery" (Henslin et al 2010: 4) whereby previous knowledge becomes inflected with sociological ways of thinking. Not only did instructors see these essays as an invitation for Engaged Learners to "take sociology home" but they were also a tool for them to negotiate the tensions between their informal knowledge and new sociological material. Most generally, these essays symbolized instructors' hope for Engaged Learners to complete their course:

> … look[ing] at the world around them more critically, so even if [they] never take another sociology course again…[that they] just start noticing things, notice things because that's the first step towards effecting any kind of changes, you have to notice it first, and ask questions, ask, ask, ask (Sophie, Interview 2, p35-36).

Regardless as to whether Engaged Learners decide to effect large or formal changes in the social world[24], these written assignments call Engaged Learners to "ask, ask, ask" after their social world. However, in asking difficult questions about their social position and common sense, instructors noted that the force of sociological critique may "come[] as literally like a rude shock to [students]" (Interview 1, p34) as their existing knowledge about the world is challenged. In a seminar panel titled: "Citizenship, Social Responsibility, and a

---

[24] Though instructors spoke about how they hoped students changed over the course of the semester, they were reluctant to suggest that students ought to complete the course with any *particular* political commitments. This position is most certainly related to discourses that connect sociology to methods and epistemological assumptions of the natural sciences and a general awareness of stereotypes that frame sociology as "artsy fartsy", "bleeding-heart-liberal-propaganda", "*just* interpretations" or "fluffy". As Gavin said about the political commitment of his students: "that is up to them" as it is not his responsibility to convert students into supporters of particular social/political movements.

University Education: What is the Connection?" Laura Shanner, argued that this rude shock occurs because Engaged Learners' relationship to knowledge acquisition does not adhere to the traditional learning curve. Although Shanner works in the field of medical ethics, her comments offer one useful way of thinking about the "rude shock" that sociology students experience: she contends that students do not start at the bottom of a knowledge ladder and climb up towards enlightenment; rather, they begin as knowledgeable and confident navigators of the social world who encounter ideas that may actually shake their confidence. Rather than working from ignorance towards mastery in a simple linear line, Engaged Learners begin with knowledges about the social world and through the process of critical thinking, work to refine their understandings. As sociology may shake or disrupt what students think they know about the world, their learning curve tends to look something like a downwards slide rather than an upwards climb. This downwards slide, however does not imply that students fall into a depression where they know "nothing;" rather, nurtured to become Engaged Learners, initial understandings become increasingly complicated, messy and nuanced. Giddens notes that this kind of relationship to sociological knowledge "enhance[s] our understanding of ourselves precisely because [it] reveal[s] what we already know and must know to get around in the social world, but are not cognisant of discursively" (1987: 8). Thus, instructors interpreted their reflexive written assignments as one resource that students could use to think through the conflicts they identify between their pre-existing knowledge and material they encounter in the course.

The interpretation of Engaged Learners that I have offered provides a different way of thinking about the invitation to sociology that occurs in the first few days of the introductory course. Contrary to the invitation informed by my interpretation of Clients, the practices and strategies discussed above offer an invitation to sociology that can be thought of as an attempt to engage students lives with sociology. Although I was sceptical as to whether an invitation to sociology could initiate Burawoy's vision, the construction of Engaged Learners seems to participate in an invitation to sociology that certainly does "start…where [students] are, not from where we are" (2007: 31). This kind of invitation to sociology corresponds well with Game and Metcalfe's understanding of a "passionate" sociology that:

> …celebrates an immersion in life, a compassionate involvement with the world and with others…[that is] concerned with the sharp and specific experiences of life; not seeking to dissolve these experiences in the pursuit of idealised abstraction…[but to] *feel* them, to be on the edge… (1996: 5).

This rather rosy picture that Game and Metcalfe offer, however, remains embedded within institutional constraints such as large class sizes, insufficient resources or departmental support and an extensive register of obligations and responsibilities that demand an instructors time. Additionally, although instructors hoped to nurture Engaged Learners in their classes, not all students are interested or accepting of this invitation. For example, in my own experience, attempts to hail students as knowledgeable social actors have been met at times with defensive impatience, confusion, anger, or complete silence from students.

77

Interpreting students as engaged learners can appear as a transgressive pedagogical practice for students who have also been called to be Clients of their institution. In <u>Practice Makes Practice</u>, Britzman clarifies how interpreting students as Engaged Learners can be seen as a disruptive practice that breaks normative rules that students may rely upon to understand their pedagogical relationship to instructors. In Britzman's text, a student-teacher named Jamie introduces a transgressive exercise that is not embraced by her students, she analyzes the situation thusly:

> Jamie took up a discursive practice in which her students could not participate. The philosophic nature of her questions seemed puzzling to the students; [her] questions were often met with silence…Jamie did not understand the way in which classroom discourse is done, that classroom discourse makes certain things sayable and others not. Her discursive practices went against the grain of established routine and she did not know how to help students participate in this different style (2003: 90).

Britzman's interpretation highlights here how students may be reluctant or resistant to instructors interpretations of them as Engaged Learners. Morgan spoke to this reluctance in speculating about how students understand reflexive written assignments:

> …it's an exciting opportunity [to write this paper], but I always wonder if [all students] actually get that out of it, or is it just – not an opportunity, but a burden? I will say there's probably a minority, a small minority, of [students] who fully appreciate…[these assignments] at the time (Interview 1, p10).

Morgan's comment brings to light how my interpretations of Engaged Learners and Clients offered here do not exist independently of each other. While Engaged Learners may understand written assignments as opportunities, Morgan believed that Clients see written work as a pesky obstacle or burden in their drive to obtain an "A" in the course.

Although I have presented my interpretation of Engaged Learners and Clients in discrete sections for clarity, they discursively exist in very close proximity. Instructors actively grappled with the tensions, contradictions and negotiations that result from these two interpretations in their development and management of their invitation to sociology in the introductory course. Instructor's negotiation of this was most evident in phrases such as: "but you have to remember…", "yeah, that's true, but…" or "well, that's *usually* how students react…" in our interview. In reviewing interview transcripts these phrases reminded me that the two interpretaions I have offered do not exist independently of each other, rather they weave in and out of each other. The instructors that I worked with relied upon both of my interpretaions of students, thus their invitations to sociology in the first days of the introductory course contained elements of an introduction to bureaucracy alongside encouragements to link sociology with their real lives. As students comprise only one half of the interaction that occurs in an invitation to sociology I will now move to offer two interpretations of instructors' discursive subject positions.

Chapter 5
Discursively Positioned Instructors

In working with instructors it quickly became clear that they interpreted their identities and many of their practices in reference to the kind of students they imagine in their classroom. For this reason, the previous chapter discussed two second order interpretaions that provide the groundwork from which my analysis of instructor's subject positions will now proceed. In this chapter I will put forth two interpretaions that emerged when I asked: If there are Clients and Engaged Learners in the classroom, what discursive position do instructors occupy in an invitation to sociology? I do not intend to imply here that there is a simple linear or causal relationship between my interpretations of students and instructors however, in interview instructors frequently spoke about their positions and practices in reference to kinds of students as discursively framed.

The relationship between my interpretaions of Service Providers and Sherpa is complicated: at times instructors spoke about conflicts between their practices in these discursive positions. I saw this emerge in interviews when instructors noted that it might seem as if they are *contradicting* themselves, or sounding *hypocritical* in reference to previous statements they made. However, those I worked with are not simply hypocritical or inconsistent thinkers rather; it is in these phrases that the tension between the discursive constructions of Sherpa and Service Providers comes to the fore. I would like to suggest that tension between these interpretations arises because instructors saw themselves as *both*

Sherpa *and* Service Providers, similarly students were Clients *and* Engaged Learners in the invitations to sociology that I worked with.

Service Providers

In interviews, instructors often referenced contextual constraints that limited their construction of the introductory course and the invitation to sociology that they created. Instructors offered examples of these constraints, some of which include: institutional procedures that had to be followed, precedents that could not be ignored, and various other discursive expressions of the neoliberal university. In this section I offer some of my observations from lecture and quotations from transcript excerpts to discuss my interpretation of the Service Provider discursive position. I will also discuss how instructors described their role as Service Providers as they appropriated discourses of the neo-liberal university. By focusing on instructors' understanding of their role as Service Provider I am able to draw a link between institutional ideological discourses and local level interactions that help us think about invitations to sociology in the introductory course. Helen Simons offers an interesting way of thinking through this connection I have made, arguing that it is precisely through one's engagement with institutional precedents and broader social discourses that we are able to think about the situated agency of actors. Simons writes:

> …policies and programmes are devised by people and implemented by people. They are not person-proof in the sense that they can be interpreted the same way in each context … people reinterpret, subvert and adapt policies to their own settings and in relation to their own needs and experience (2009: 69).

In this way, introductory sociology instructors remain "…key protagonists in classroom transactions" (Simons 2009: 69) as they reinterpret, subvert, adapt, and respond to contextual discourses that shape their construction of an invitation to sociology.

I first began to understand the instructors' interpretation of their role as Service Providers when they spoke about their projection of Clients' expectations for the instructor to "edutain" in their classes. "Edutainment" is described by Pocklington and Tupper as a pedagogical style where instructors present course content in a simple and straightforward manner while creating a "show" that will "keep the attention of the half of the class for whom this was just another course" (2002: 46). Those I worked with felt that edutainment could take different forms within the classroom, including elements such as: elaborate powerpoint presentations, youtube videos or documentaries, dramatic lectures, and "fun" group activities. Regardless of the particular manifestation of edutainment (there may be nothing inherently problematic about these strategies), those I worked with described edutainment generally as a watered-down, superficial, and politically sanitized mode of teaching that is primarily focused on motivating students rather than introducing substantive sociological conflicts. Those I worked with did not de facto object to the practices listed above rather, they resisted the imperative that they believed lies behind edutainment: the responsibility to motivate students and "hook" their attention onto the course material. Again, it is not simply that instructors dislike powerpoint, or think that

showing youtube clips in lecture is a waste of time; their objection to edutainment rests upon their resistance to a pedagogical model that positions them as Service Providers charged with the responsibility of motivating Clients and accommodating demands or desires they do not feel are reasonable. Two excerpts from textbooks used by those I worked with help capture the motivational element of edutainment. From one textbook's preface to the student, the primary author writes:

> When I took my first course in sociology, I was "hooked." Seeing how marvellously my life had been affected by these larger social influences opened my eyes to a new world…I hope that this will be your experience too (Henslin 2010: preface to the student).

The intention to "hook" students into sociology was echoed by Morgan in lecture as well:

> … I want to make clear to you that I'm very passionate about sociology and at times during this course I suspect that you're going to feel like I'm pushing it on you…I see myself kind of as being an ambassador for sociology…. [and] I want you to get turned on to sociology (Lecture 2, p2).

To talk about "hooking" and motivating Clients, it is important to note that Pocklington and Tupper situate the practice of edutainment within a context where those who attend lecture are not particularly interested in the subject matter of the course:

> Some of the students are taking the course only because they need it to get into medicine or social work. Some are bored because the course is too easy, others because it is too hard. During any given class, some are completing their chemistry lab

> reports, some are reading newspapers, and many are
> daydreaming (1992: 46).

Instructors echoed Pocklington and Tupper's characterization of their classroom audience; because Introductory Sociology is a prerequisite for higher-level courses or may be used as general credits towards a bachelor's degree, they felt that many students were registered in the class for purely instrumental reasons. Although instructor's expressed a desire to introduce sociology in relevant and engaging ways, they were rather uncomfortable with the prospect of edutaining ends-driven Clients whom they felt expected the instructor to work and guarantee them an "easy 'A'" on their transcript. Instructors articulated defensive feelings of resentment towards students[25] when we spoke about the imperative to edutain, Ben most clearly articulated this sentiment:

> …that's the other problem with teaching…it could be all intro courses… but trying to break this notion that I'm a Service Provider: that [students] paid for the course and therefore they're interested in the following…the only thing that you're entitled to get from me in the course is to be marked fairly, and to be helped with content when you need it (Interview 1, p23).

To be clear, those I worked with were all dedicated instructors who have put in many hours of planning and preparation in constructing their course. In addition

---

[25] Although instructors most often referenced the expectations of students in speaking about the imperative to edutain, it is important to remember that these students exist within and have been socialized into a very particular institutional space. In reflecting on the projections instructors made about their students it may be possible that these expressions are displaced feelings regarding the broader institutional context in which they work. This interpretation is in part substantiated by instructors' references to departmental discourses about "good" teaching that they find problematic and the ideological economy behind the distribution of teaching awards.

to this, these individuals participated in my research *because* they take seriously, and were interested in talking about, the invitation to sociology they create in their introductory course. However, as Ben suggests, the work of motivating students was problematic insofar as this task shifts instructors into the position of a Service Provider who acts as a merely technical bridge between students and the course curriculum. In addition to this, the time, energy, and resources required to develop "edutaining" lectures is a rather foolish investment for those who felt that teaching typically merits little reward in their institution.

To understand the social position of instructors within an edutaiment relationship, Morgan juxtaposed the pressure she feels to edutain with her memories of being an undergraduate student:

> **Morgan:** … I mean, it's frustrating and it makes me angry. It makes me want to say: "y'know what? you should have sat in my undergrad classes! Where my prof stood in front of the lectern and read their notes. That's what you should get a taste of instead…"
> **Alecia**: doesn't everyone feel that way though, like: "I had it so much harder than kids today"?
> **Morgan**: …I don't know. That's a good question…But I have buckled a bit too…
> **Alecia**: you don't need to say "buckled", couldn't you say "responded"?
> **Morgan**: well, I think it's buckling, if I'm making an effort to show youtube videos, if I'm trying to keep up with my colleagues who are being fun and bringing in TV clips, But, y'know what, to me, it's probably not buckling, because it really does enrich the classroom. I don't know, but I've changed (Interview 1, p12).

In this excerpt Morgan illuminates the troubled relationship that instructors had with the imperative to edutain: they were frustrated by the prospect of having to edutain but were also intrigued by how alternative presentation strategies could

85

enrich their classroom. The reluctance to embrace edutainment, derives in part from instructor's discomfort in being charged with the responsibility of not only "imparting knowledge to those who may not want or need that knowledge" but also carrying the burden of inciting student motivation about the subject matter (Bonner 1990: 18). Kieran Bonner elaborates that within this relationship it is Clients who "keep the business [of education] alive" and thus course instructors are expected to keep them happy and motivated because "unhappy consumers are bad for [the] business" (1990: 20) of higher education. The pressure that instructors felt to edutain introduced the possibility of a relationship wherein they act as mere "functionaries in the commerce of [student] satisfactions" (McHugh 1992: 107) to the point that they "buckle" to student demands even though they may judge them to be unreasonable.

I found that instructors tended to highlight their status as experts in sociology to counteract the pressure they felt to act as Service Providers who edutain to please their Clients. In resisting the social position of edutainer, Ben explains that he would prefer to act as an expert for novice students:

> I talk about the nature of empty abstractions [with students] I mean: "you're not my Clients! I'm not your Service Provider, these meaningless abstractions are completely inappropriate for the reality of what goes on here! …I'm not providing a service, I'm at the front of the room because I have something that you can learn from, but you are working", like: "you work for me, I don't work for you" (Interview 1, p24).

While Ben provides an alternative to the edutainment imperative, he also introduces another important element of my interpretation of Service Providers.

86

In challenging the imperative to motivate and entertain Clients, instructors turned to reinscribe their status as serious intellectual authorities. However, considering the "filling station" (McHugh 1992: 108) discourses within the contemporary university, this expertise is once again put to service in an instrumental transaction where they act as knowledgeable service attendants who are expected (by Clients and their institution) to skilfully and efficiently transmit their expertise to others. Given the contemporary neoliberal discourses of the university, the expertise that instructors invoke to distinguish themselves from mere entertainers reaffirms the discursive subject position of the Service Provider who initiates novices into the practice of sociological inquiry. Though some instructors felt conflicted about their position as "expert" in the classroom, I found many instances where they reinscribed this intellectual hierarchy between themselves and students in response to the imperative to edutain. For example, Ben explained how he understands one of his responsibilities in the classroom:

> … part of my role, I think, is that I'm supposed to give a formal lecture, because I'm the expert in what we're talking about, but I don't think that needs to be a full three hours a week, so I try to get them discussing stuff and giving them topics. I do try to have that element in there. Um, but I'm not convinced that like free-flowing discussion – I mean, even at the Grad-level that doesn't work all that well, I don't think (Interview 2, p10).

Ben's acceptance of his role of expert relates well to an incident that occurred early on in my research and incited my interpretation of the expert Service Provider. Informally sharing my research with a departmental administrator, they explained to me that sociology instructors who begin teaching on the first day of

87

class do so as a way of intimidating students who may think that the course is "easy" and the instructor is going to "hold their hand" through the semester. This acts as a kind of "wake up call" to some students. Following this rationale, Ben spoke to how he begins the semester by discussing the theoretical foundations of the discipline[26]:

> …I've come to, through teaching, realize that the
> core of the class [is] there because they were told that
> it was an easy "A", lots of science majors just taking
> it as an elective that will boost their GPA and then
> get really mad at me, when I [say]: "you heard that
> this was a bird course, and you're here to get an "A"
> in this section? – no." And this is why I start with the
> foundations: this is a science and there is a lot of
> work to build this *(*Interview 1, p10).

In the pedagogical relationship Ben describes here students have been constructed as "sociologically ignorant" (Kendall et al 2007: 18) Clients who "have no idea what the discipline is about: what it studies, how it studies things" (Ben, lecture 1, p1), while the instructor comes to occupy the position of knower or expert. Tompkins argues that this hierarchy between expert and novice is in fact necessary for traditional conceptualizations of education to even be possible. Tompkins suggests that the very structure of schooling compels students to "believe that there are others who know better than [they] do" namely, their instructors (1996: xix). Tompkins' reflection on her own practices as an expert

---

[26] It is interesting to note here that while Ben has constructed students as demanding Clients in this example he also worked with a construction of students as Engaged Learners with whom he initiated a "Ben the alien" example to draw out their informal knowledge of the social world.

Service Provider, helps situate this discursive subject position in reference to traditional models of "good teaching" and educational biography:

> …all my effort as a teacher went into finding things to say about the texts I'd assigned, since, as far as I knew, good teaching consisted of having brilliant ideas about the subject matter. This was the model I had been given, and it was what I tried to live up to. Year after year I strove to achieve that ideal of brilliance, and year after year I waited for a student to tell me that I had (1996: 90).

Tradition and biography offer an ideal that Tompkins felt she had to live up to however, my interpretation of instructors as expert Service Providers rests heavily on instructors constructions of demanding, ends-driven Clients. For example, although Ben seems less conflicted about his role as an expert, he was aware that the possibility of this position, and his security within it, remains contingent upon his ability to answer the questions of demanding Clients:

> …teaching is a skill like anything else, once you've done it a while these questions that come out of nowhere [from students], and kind of stop you… well [after a while] you don't panic as much, because panic is the worst, because you're screwed, right?...I started to find that [for] my own prep, I would start putting in those little notes about what to say, but backup stuff…as well. Because when you come off like: 'oh 1763! [is the year this event happened]' or whatever that is, you get that instant credibility…And if you lie, they're all on Wikipedia in a second in the classroom anyways! (Interview 2, p3-4).

So although instructors appealed to their expertise in their field of study, in drawing on this discourse they also felt pressure to be absolute and infallible knowledge suppliers, an expectation that they could not possibly fulfil, though

tried to nonetheless. In rejecting the position of edutainers then, some instructors leapt to highlight their status as legitimate experts this characteristic then became another element of my interpretation of Service Providers in the classroom.

The expert position of the instructor, relative to Clients, came into view most clearly when instructors characterized the relationship between sociology and common sense as one of antagonism. In constructing a simple dichotomy between common sense and sociological knowledge, instructors positioned students as figures who *think* they know what is going on in the world while in actuality, it is the enlightened instructor who can see what is *really* going on. In this relationship it is as if students exhibit some simplistic form of false-consciousness and the instructor's role as a Service Provider is to use their expertise to convince them otherwise. Morgan directly implicated her students in this dynamic in her second lecture:

> We're taught when we're younger that we're free to do whatever we want with our lives. Were you taught that? You're free, you can be what you want to be, be a doctor, be a lawyer, be a truck driver, and do what you want! To some extent this is true, and I suspect that's why you're here, because you're working towards those goals, but in reality, the organization of the social world actually constrains our freedom a bit. It opens up certain opportunities and it closes others. So we're not quite as free as we think we are (p8).

Before students have even been introduced to Marx's concept of false consciousness, Morgan projected this status upon them; while students may believe themselves to be radically free agents, in actuality their agency is situated in particular ways that the instructor will enlighten them to. This framing of the

relationship between sociology and common sense was overwhelmingly prevalent among the cases I worked with. It is something like a sociological fairytale, wherein common sense is presented as a straw man to be destroyed by sociological inquiry[27]. As a fairytale narrative, this conflict between common sense and sociology also prescribes the appropriate roles for instructors and students. For example, an inset "Critical Thinking" article in one text that an instructor used reinforces the idea that students are merely "bad" sociologists who ought to be corrected by experts. The author writes:

> …when people are ignorant about quantum mechanics or medieval literature, they are generally aware of their ignorance, readily admit it, and understand that the remedy for their ignorance is serious and systematic study. When, however, the subject is how societies operate, or why people behave the way they do, the situation is different. Confusing their folk beliefs with knowledge, people typically don't realize their ignorance…We all walk around with theories in our heads about the social world in which we move…In that sense, we are all social scientists. *But most of us are bad ones* as these theories are based on fallacious common sense (Judith Shapiro in Kendall et al 2007: 19, emphasis mine).

When students are told that "things are not what they seem" (Morgan, lecture 2, p14) and sociology is a remedy to the dangers of common sense, education in a traditional sense, then necessitates that the sociology instructor comes to occupy the position of the one who knows what *really* is, and can share this with

---

[27] Contrary to the construction of Engaged Learners who have the capability to construct a relationship between shared "common sense" about the social world and sociology, this dynamic between sociology and common sense delegitimizes common sense that students enter the classroom with and the "everyday" knowledge that they could use to think through sociological concepts.

misinformed students. Muriel's syllabus also confirms the expert status of professional sociologists as this documents notes that material for the course derives from "systematic research carried out by qualified practitioners in the social sciences" as "***sociology is not common sense, nor...opinion***" (syllabus, p4, emphasis in original). Insofar as students remained "in training" with mere common sense at their disposal (Gavin, Interview 1, p5), the instructors I worked with constructed their position as that of an enlightened expert who disabuses students of their common sense. Thus, to borrow a phrase from Kant, the expert Service Provider, in a sense, awakens students from their dogmatic slumber (2001: 5).

It is especially interesting to note the gendered dynamics at play when female instructors negotiate their status as an expert Service Provider. In dealing with sensitive or contentious topics, female instructors mentioned that students are sometimes resistant to accepting sociological ways of framing issues and social inequalities. Sophie noted that she has had students become angry with her as her course disrupts their "charmed life" in which "they've never experienced poverty or hardship of any kind and they really don't believe that it's out there and they really do believe that people who are suffering deserve to suffer" (Interview 1, p34). Muriel also offered anecdotes that she felt demonstrated how some students could or would not allow themselves to see issues sociologically and instead thought she was espousing unfounded political opinions in lecture rather than sociological analysis. Though male instructors also encountered students who would challenge or interrupt their lectures it is important to note that

92

one's gender impacts the ways in which instructors understood their relationship to this subject position and their students. This issue is complicated when common sense narratives and ideologies are disrupted and instructor's answers to student questions cannot be simple and straightforward anymore; one cannot simply "back up" these analyses with absolute objective proofs such as dates or statistics. Thus, from a feminist angle, Susan Heald argues that complicated answers provided by less authoritarian female instructors may unsettle an instructors credibility in the eyes of students. She writes:

> I often refuse, against the wishes of some students, to deliver a single right answer in an appropriately brief sentence, which can be written down. This, from the position of traditional pedagogy, can look like "not knowing what she's talking about" (1991: 144).

Though the position of expert is certainly complicated by issues of gender, the general dynamic remains between the Client and expert Service Provider: sociological knowledge is transferred from one party to another.

I would like to suggest that my interpretation of instructors as Service Providers helps us think about how an invitation to sociology may not only reaffirm neoliberal discourses of the university but may also act as an initiation to the hierarchical and bureaucratic organization of the contemporary university. Interestingly, as mere Service Providers, instructors interpreted their position as being subordinate to their demanding Clients, however as expert Service Providers they attempted to reverse this relationship. Regardless of the precise hierarchical position that instructors occupy, the broader "filling station" logic of the contemporary university necessitates that invitations to sociology in part act to

distinguish: "the knowing and the ignorant, the mature and the unformed, the capable and the incapable" (Ross 1991: xx) parties in the situation of the introductory course. Whether the edutainer is working for demanding Clients, or the mature and knowing expert tries to reverse this relationship, the institutional discourses that undergird my interpretation of the Service Provider creates an invitation to sociology as an invitation to the many hierarchies that organize the contemporary university. This initiation played out subtly in invitations to sociology as, for example, instructors included "Dr." in syllabi or blackboards, discussed in detail their academic credentials, or "name-dropped" theorists and sociological jargon in the first class. However, insofar as instructors "inherit" particular ideas about what "good" teaching looks like from tradition and institutional discourses it may be possible that individual instructors recognize themselves as such only in reference to their designation as experts or Service Providers; their status as professors rendered intelligible through their role as experts Service Providers in the contemporary university. Although I did not analyze Introductory Sociology textbooks, those that instructor's used in their course were traditional and encyclopaedia-style texts that catalogue key perspectives, theories and figures in an easily "digestible" written style. The sheer volume of information in these texts, combined with the relatively accessible written style may call readers to occupy a position of ignorance, immaturity, and incapability in reference to the "mastered masters" of sociology's origin who not only "initiate novices [but also] maintain the traditions and totemic procedures by

94

which sociologists recognise and celebrate their disciplinary identities" (Game and Metcalfe 1996: 22).

Sherpa

> Think of me as the Sherpa and we're climbing Mount Everest together, and I've been up this mountain a bunch of times, I know the terrain, I've got the big backpack, I've got the maps and the tools and the know-how to use them….my job is to kind of catch you before you fall off the cliff somewhere…My job is to point out things along the way you might not have noticed because you're panting and gasping for air…I am with you in the journey. You are not alone in this journey, and we are engaged in this learning process together. So it's not: "I'm giving to you, and you'd better figure it out!" but: "you and I are…moving through this together …the good stuff is difficult and messy and I find it difficult too, so let's go at it together (Shanner 2009).

This excerpt from Laura Shanner summarizes my interpretation of the Sherpa subject position that instructors embody in the classroom. As Sherpa, the Introductory Sociology instructor: acts as a "tour guide" for students new to their institution, teaches course content through anecdotes or examples from the "real" world they share with students, and orchestrates class discussions. I will discuss each of these practices to discuss the discursive subject position of the Sherpa and to close this section, I will discuss some of the practical difficulties that instructors encountered in this subject position.

Firstly, as Sociology 100 is a junior-level pre-requisite course there are many students for whom this may be their first experience in a post-secondary institution; offering general advice to these students was an important element in

95

my interpretation of the Sherpa subject position. In syllabi and on the first day of class, Morgan, Muriel, and Sophie offered helpful advice to students new to this space. Morgan advised students most generally that the decisions they make today in university have implications for the kind of decisions that they will be able to make in the future: "university is "about partying but, in moderation, right? Like, you don't want to ruin your chances of getting into law school three years from now" (Lecture 1, p7). In offering this advice she situated student's practices at university within a broader social context, essentially saying: "this course is not just another grade on your transcript rather, the decisions that you make now may have real implications for your future". As I have interpreted the position of Sherpa, Morgan offers this advice in hopes that students will "get the most out of life" and seize the opportunities extended to them in the university (Lecture 1, p7). As a tour guide, Sophie also offered a "helping hand" to her students who "have no idea how to study [or] how to prepare [for coursework]…[because] they didn't learn the skills, [and] they didn't proactively go and try and find out what they should do" (Interview 1, p4). In response to this situation, Sophie developed a section in her syllabus, based on her own experiences, that outlines some strategies that students can use to do better in their courses. This advice included many things that "good" students already take for granted, such as: keep up to date with the readings, attend all classes, write thorough lecture notes, review lecture notes each week, plan ahead, be honest about your writing skills, and treat your instructors respectfully (Syllabus, p3). In addition to this section she also provided students with a handout that offers tips for essay writing as she has

found that many of her students don't know how to effectively write a paper when they begin her course (Interview 1, p7). Sophie could have easily framed this advice as a set of *expectations* that she has of her students (making this a contract review with Clients) however, marked by the title "advice" and her informal address in class lecture, this is an offer on her part to help students adjust to the current norms and expectations of this space (even if they find them slightly problematic themselves). I also identified the casual and light-hearted approach that Sophie demonstrated in lecture on the front page of another instructor's syllabus:

> *Warning:* **Unless filed safely with you Sociology notes, this course outline will self-destruct, taking your grades with it** (Syllabus, p1, emphasis in original)

In a light-hearted and somewhat comedic tone, this advice introduces the ways in which instructors used humour in their classrooms to create a situation that balances their seriousness and credibility as Service Providers with an acknowledgement that they are also "normal" and fallible social actors (Morgan interview 2, p15). Comments like: "Is everyone here for sociology 100? A fun-filled term?" or tongue-in-cheek advice like: "so arrange your skipping schedule with someone else" (Morgan, Lecture 1, p1) garnered chuckles from students, while also exposing the instructor as a social actor who exists outside of their role as a university professor. The use of humour, colloquial language, occasional profanity, and references to stereotypical undergraduate (mis)behaviours by also

97

aided in the smooth flow of lectures. For example, Ben closed his first class in the

following way:

> Any other questions? No?...Okay well then…in the grand tradition of first week, it's still nice outside, go have a beer, and I'll see you next week! (p12)

In trying to trace back the development of advice that instructors offered as tour

guides, and their desire to incorporate humour in the classroom, I noticed that

some could recall incidents where they had benefitted from the kind gestures of

their instructors. Morgan recalled an incident from her undergraduate degree

where she was required to do a presentation in front of her class:

> …I was just a wreck…and I remember putting my papers [down], shaking on the podium, and [the instructor] sitting there and just saying, like: "you're going to be fine, just relax, you're going to be great." And that was the human side of her!"…it was like: "oh my god! You're human too!...it has impacted me obviously, because it felt like…she [was] on my side [and] she's not a big scary personality, but she's actually on my side, she thinks I'm going to do okay…(Interview 2, p16).

Sophie also told me a story about an instructor in a graduate-level course who

offered her a helping hand:

> … rather than chopping me into pieces and throwing my into the dumpster, which [the instructor] did routinely with other students, she actually was very kind, very sweet to me and she said: "come to my office" during one of the early days of the course…she gave me this like y'know [booklet] for completely thick people y'know, like a two-page book, [and said]: "this is the absolute basics of all you need to know, to even slightly be able to talk with a little bit of authority" (Interview 1, p19).

These two stories situate my interpretation of Sherpa in reference to instructors'

educational biography, and now in relation to students within their own classes.

This generational connection establishes a sense of commonality between the

parties present in the introductory course: both are/have experienced life as a

student. As Sherpa, these instructors offered Engaged Learners reassurance that

"you are not alone in this journey…we are engaged in this learning process

together" (Shanner 2009).

Another important element of my interpretation of Sherpa is an

instructor's creative appropriation of popular culture examples and their use of

personal anecdotes in class. These practices helped solidify the mentorship-like

relationship they shared with students. Ben offered some particularly interesting

popular culture examples that demonstrate this practice[28]. Using an image of the

Cleveland Indian's baseball team logo, Ben has students work in small groups to

come up with two reasons why the image is problematic, and two reasons why it

is not. He then has students talk about the representation in small groups before

they join together as a class to talk about racial stereotypes, stigma, social

structure, status and roles (Interview 1, p19). In using this popular culture

example that is accessible to most students, he invites Engaged Learners to

consider the ways in which representations of certain social groups perpetuate

racial inequality:

---

[28] Though these examples are drawn from interview rather than observations on
the first two days, they are representative of my observations in his class and
examples offered by other instructors.

> There is nothing inherently wrong with this one
> image [in the Cleveland Indians logo], but why is it
> that we only see this type of status or role
> represented over and over again? I mean we're
> talking about…issue[s] of social inequality…think
> about the normal status of a mascot, I mean, which is
> what this Indian is, a mascot is kind of a fun
> frivolous thing on the sidelines of the field, which is
> interesting, but not central to the action, so use that
> understanding [to think about how we understand]
> what [Indian] reservations are (Interview 1, p19)

To elaborate how popular culture representations influence our understanding the world, Ben also uses a television clip from *The Simpsons* where Homer is watching a black comedian "cut-down" white people. After viewing this clip he asks students:

> "why isn't this problematic?"…It's like: "well, do
> you see white people only represented as bumbling
> fools every time? … no, they're represented as
> everything, so the problem isn't with the individual
> representation, but the pattern of representations
> (Interview 1, p20).

Although the content here focuses on race, these specific examples help demonstrate how Sherpa situate themselves within a social world they share with students, they encounter, or "climb", the social world together using sociological tools. Thus, the connection between sociology and "real" life that instructors spoke about in reference to written assignments can also occur in lecture as Sherpa connect sociological concepts to their lives and those of students. For example, in lecture Ben explained to me how he challenges students to think about the ways in which their lives relate to gendered beauty norms:

> …I go on this big, long, thing about trying to find the
> perfect partner, but not [being] with her because her

100

ass is too big. And there's kind of a big scoff [among students], they kind of laugh, but I'm not joking…and then I say to the women, cause we do a lot about beauty: "y'know, we see clearly that women suffer from this more than men but how many women here, would date a guy who wore a dress? … I mean all of you guys make this real everyday" (Interview 2, p22).

We can see in some of the earlier examples the ways in which instructors draw on their own biographies in the introductory sociology classroom: these instances are too many to count as instructors frequently used anecdotes and examples from their personal lives to demonstrate course content. In telling personal stories, instructor's presented themselves as "real" people who model some of the ways that students can apply course material to their own lives. Sophie shared many stories from her own biography on the first day of class and in interview she spoke about how she sees her personal life as "an open book", more than happy to "trot out [her]self as "Exhibit A" if it's going to help [students] learn something" (Interview 2, p26). Coupled with her informal lecture style, Sophie's disclosure of personal stories positions her as a living, breathing person in the world, just like her students. Space does not permit discussion of each and every personal anecdote that instructors offered however, a few include: summer job experiences as students, favourite movies or television characters, "sociology in action" experiences they have witnessed and recollections of their undergraduate experiences. Though this discussion is brief I do not intend to understate how pervasive and important this element is in my interpretation of

instructors as Sherpa. Muriel noted the importance of these personal anecdotes as well, in thinking about what students remember of her course:

> …they're not going to remember the details, they're going to remember the overall things. They're going to remember some of your stories, they're going to remember films, um, they'll remember a patchwork of things. So if you talk to them a year later y'know: "do you remember functionalism?" They'll look at me blank, and then I'll give them a cue and [then] the light starts to dawn; "oh yeah". So it comes back when you remind them. So don't worry if you miss something, it's not the specifics (Interview 1, p33).

Although the "official" curriculum remains important to Muriel, she was aware that her students would remember a patchwork of elements from the course, one of which would be some of her personal stories. So although Sherpa enter the classroom because there is a course curriculum, they offered personal stories that act as an important element in building a working relationship with their students.

While Sherpa shared stories of their own, they also set out particular guidelines for the ways in which students could share their own stories. In my observation of classes, Sherpa moderated discussion as a way of harnessing, or channelling student engagement. Rather than being an assertion of their hierarchical authority over students, instructors spoke of guidelines for discussion as protections for both themselves and their students. This became apparent in a story Sophie told me about a particularly disturbing discussion that occurred in her classroom. After this experience, she recalled leaving the classroom and feeling as if she had been "assaulted":

> ...[and] it's usually accompanied by a sick feeling in your stomach, like: "oh my god…[or] what did I do?"

> because that's always my thing: what did I do wrong? What could I have done? I don't externalize: "it's nothing to do with me, it's just a couple of lunatics in the class!" No! Part of my job is to manage those lunatics, not let the lunatics take over the asylum (Interview 2, p15).

While instructors felt that student learning could occur through means other than didactic explication, they were careful to set out their expectations for classroom discussion in the first few days of class. This practice was described by Sophie as an important step in working towards developing "an optimum learning environment" (Sophie, interview 2, p16) where no one leaves the classroom feeling as if they have been "assaulted". Sophie also explained that moderation of classroom discussion is one skill where sociological knowledge becomes incredibly valuable:

> …It's managing…it's another area where sociological knowledge is so useful, because of course we learn about these group cultures…[and] for me, it is absolutely paramount to go as you mean to go on, as I said, from the very first class. Like, get, make sure that you get the class culture, as much as possible, where you want it (Interview 2, p16).

If the classroom is to be a place "in which we all feel free to express our opinions and points of view" (Syllabus, p2) an important responsibility for those in the discursive position of Sherpa is to lay out some guidelines for how we are to proceed in doing this, including: being polite, not monopolising discussion, not interrupting, being considerate towards those who may be shy, and always treating others respectfully. Morgan explained some of these guidelines to her students in class:

I know that you're going to be making connections to your lived experiences and that's wonderful and I invite you to share those experiences with the class. But when we do that though, a couple things are important to remember…Sociology is sometimes contentious and debatable: there are contentious topics that get a rise out of people. And so I request of you, in all classes, that we embark on these discussion respectfully, when people are talking we listen, we don't chatter, we [also] don't bring newspapers into class…and then of course, when it's your turn to share we will listen to you as well (Lecture 1, p9).

Because many students may not have had discussions about some of the topics that arise in Introductory Sociology classes, my interpretation of Sherpa includes recognition of an instructors responsibility to teach students how to do this and then "go on as they mean to go on", helping students to participate along the way. In my interpretation of Sherpa, these instructors utilize class discussions about sociological issues to help "break down barriers…[and] show students that this is not some obscure discipline" (Morgan, Interview 1, p7). As discussion moderators, these instructors began with discussion skills and interests that students already have and simply "show [them] how to do [this] in a more disciplined, rounded" way (Morgan, Interview 1, p7). For Gavin, this meant clarifying the difference between "talk show" conversations and class discussions, so although he begins his course using many terms that students are familiar with, he is clear that this colloquial or common language does not imply that the mode of engagement is unstructured (Interview 1, p9-10). These guidelines for engagement are an important part of my interpretation of instructors as Sherpa who help students climb the mountain: they provide the tools of sociology (ie.

theories, concepts, etc) and teach students how to use them as well (ie. guidelines for discussion).

An important part of my interpretation here is the kind of relationship to students that those I worked with felt was possible. Muriel describes the dynamic of this relationship:

> … I don't want to take care of [students] personal lives and problems, it's not that at all. But I want to go to them where they are at. So they're frightened - I want to reassure them and make sure that they can do this work. They are overly-confident - I want them to see that it's great that they are confident, but they need to come to see that perhaps there is more to this… I often will say to students – this is so common: "you're so unfocused and I recognize it because sometimes I am too, so c'mon, let's help each other let's do this!...I had trouble with that too…here's how we can do it" (Interview 1, p30).

As Sherpa and Engaged Learners in sociology "climb the mountain" together, the relationship between them becomes one of informal apprenticeship rather than a rigorous certification procedure: In the practice I have discussed, Sherpa present a sociology that is not so much about rule-following and memorization as it is about the development of skills and competencies that will help students climb other "mountains" in the future. As Sherpa, the instructors I worked with pull the introductory course away from the logic of: "I am giving to you and you'd better figure it out" pedagogical model. Instead, the introductory course becomes a situation where both parties are moving through issues and topics together. For example, Sophie explained that when sociology "pull[s] the carpet out from

under" us (Muriel, Interview 1, p9), Sherpa can help students approach topics

they find difficult:

> ...how I tend to deal with those sort of moments
> [when students struggle with the material], -and
> there are lots of them of course in sociology
> because sociology loves blowing the lid off all
> kinds of things: … I tend to just watch very
> carefully the reactions, the kind of body movements
> and if I do sense some hostility or anger I will
> immediately take a little side road in order to supply
> [some] kind of evidence or illustration (Interview 1,
> p33-34).

As Sherpa, these instructors saw sociology as more than just a collection of

abstract theories, concepts and facts rather, this material has the potential to be

quite disruptive and troublesome for students. Interpersonal management then, is

an important element of my interpretation of Sherpa. Sophie in particular spoke

to this:

> … I'm not going to…"dumb-down" or sanitize the
> material. I will not do that, it is what it is! But there
> are still ways of getting around [the difficulties that
> students may have]…it's one of those interesting
> teaching challenges where you don't want to
> compromise your integrity [so] it's an interesting
> challenge… (Interview 2, p7).

It is indeed a challenge to act as Sherpa so that Engaged Learners can think

through course content and Muriel noted how this can be an emotional situation

for both parties:

> … it's wanting the students to love sociology
> because I love it, and I'm sharing something I love,
> and I want them to love it too…in many ways, I
> want them to be just like family. I want them to be
> sharing with me, discussing with me, excited about
> things…caring (Interview 1, p29).

106

Though instructors spoke about the rewards they garner from appropriating the Sherpa subject position, this requires a significant amount of work, commitment and institutional support. Considering the increasing bureaucratization and instrumentality of post-secondary education, there are various kinds of limitations placed on instructors who desire to construct themselves as Sherpa and the likelihood that they could exclusively practice the strategies I have discussed. For those I worked with, Sherpa-characteristics were mixed in with their status as Service Providers. This became clear for me when instructors spoke about the risks one takes in telling personal stories[29]. In interview Morgan described this issue in terms of being cautious not to appear too personal:

> **Alecia**: I always worry that I would be breaking some kind of rule, like, teachers aren't supposed to be emotional, 'cause if I'm emotional, I worry that students will think…I'm not "objective".
> **Morgan**:…I can see them thinking that. But I think there's something to be said about showing them that you're passionate about what you do [and also] that you're human…I think I'm probably contradicting myself here, but I do think that it's important that they see that…and I guess that's the struggle then: being "The Professor"…but then also being able to talk about…real life, family or y'know a death in the family, or whatever, to show that you have a life
> **Alecia**: so negotiating that balance?
> **Morgan**: and then I think back to – it becomes more of a struggle, I think, because of gender (Interview 2, p12).

---

[29] Although this challenge was most salient for the female instructors I worked with, the "balancing act" between Sherpa and Service Providers is something that all instructors spoke of.

Sophie noted this tension as well, believing that students may see the expression of strong emotions as a cue that the instructor is less knowledgeable compared to others who refrain from telling personal stories or conversing casually with students. Reflecting on student feedback about her informal and anecdotal-style lectures, she commented:

> …for the most part they really enjoy [this strategy] but there's always the odd one…that will put in an evaluation or something: "tells too many personal stories" or "we don't really want to know about your private life". But they're so often in the minority and my reaction to those is kind of: "whoa, what's going on for you, that you don't want to hear this stuff? If you want some "dry-as-a-bone" lecturer then depart from sociology"…[however] there are some students who believe that um, a good prof is someone who is very dry and distanced and kind of um, didactic and all that…so for someone who is more informal, is more joke-y [these students believe that] they can't possibly be as knowledgeable as assumed (Interview 1, p27).

Considering the perceived risk associated with telling personal stories, Muriel explained how she manages the use of anecdotes she shares with her students:

> One thing that I wanted to say to you is that I tell a lot of personal stories in my classes, and I'm well-aware that sometimes I go too far. It's not what I tell them, but it's how much. You can't do too much of that, it's not wise…and I'm not sure exactly why or what it is, but I know at a gut level that you don't tell too many… (Interview 1, p28).

For the purposes of my analysis, this balancing act that instructors spoke about helps show that the desire instructors had to act as Sherpa is intersected by other factors, specifically, the pressure they feel to act as expert Service Providers.

The Sherpa interpretation offers one last way of thinking about invitations to sociology. I would like to suggest that my interpretation of Sherpa opens up the possibility of seeing an invitation to sociology as an invitation to a particular kind of intellectual journey. Regardless of the particular curriculum content (ie. Will functionalism be introduced? Does the instructor utilize a Marxist perspective?), the Sherpa metaphor constitutes an invitation to sociology as an opportunity for students to think sociologically with the aid of a mentor who has been up the "mountain" before. However, although instructors expressed strong desires to act as Sherpa for their students, those I worked with identified as both Sherpa *and* Service Providers. Considering this, the interpretations I have offered pull these positions into tension with each other, illuminating the potential negotiations that instructors face in creating an invitation to sociology. By offering these two interpretations, I have shown that instructors presentation of self and practices in the classroom are not merely arbitrary or defined by tradition. Rather, those I worked with create their invitation to sociology in reference to other social constructions (ie. students as Clients or Engaged Learners) and institutionalized discourses that both constrain and enable the kind of invitation to sociology they offer.

Chapter 6
Returning to the Introduction

> We want to get behind the kind of representations people like to give us…get behind how they like to explain the world and say: "well, does this really hold up? Or is that a nice way of masking a bunch of problematic things?" What we want to look at in particular, is what we often consider normal, or natural, right? … Berger says we've got to get behind that, behind those explanations and representations, behind that and see what lies there (Ben, Lecture 2, p24)

I hope that the interpretations of students and teachers that I have offered here may "get behind" nice explanations and common sense about the introductory sociology course. In some sense, the issues and interpretations I have discussed may seem somewhat familiar to readers and, as they are based on the first-order interpretations of instructors, those I worked with may not regard my discussion to be particularly novel. The ordinariness of my interpretations is, as Giddens argues, precisely the strength of research that is grounded in the dynamic of the double hermeneutic. He explains that this type of research:

> …enhance[s] our understanding of ourselves precisely because they reveal what we already know and must know to get around in the social world, but are not cognisant of discursively. There is from this perspective no paradox in saying that what we already know warrants detailed study, yet that the outcome of such study is far from self-evident (1987: 8).

Giddens offers two valuable insights for thinking about the achievement of this project. Firstly, my interpretations of student and instructor subject positions

demonstrate valuable work in making explicit these positions as interpreted by the instructors I worked with. Secondly, as my research is confined to only a slice of the introductory course, this work may act to encourage further detailed study into other "slices" that constitute this social event as it relates to the construction of the discipline. On this note my interpretations, stripped of the specific details from each case, constitute two generalized interpretive discourses that may prove fruitful for further research that focuses on introductions to sociology. One begins with my interpretation of Clients and the other with Engaged Learners. I will discuss each in turn to elaborate how my research demonstrates relevance beyond my specific object of inquiry.

Firstly, my discussion of Clients suggests the possibility that an invitation to sociology may act as an invitation to the neoliberal and consumer-culture of the contemporary university. This interpretation begins with the discursive construction of Clients that contains both activity and passivity; the client is active in the sense that this consumer demands certain services and expects to get their money's worth from the university. Instructors however, also described the Client as somewhat passive in relationship to sociological knowledge; instructors understood that although *they* have a passion for traditional intellectual pursuits, the Client is only engaged instrumentally in the introductory course; to get an "A" on their transcript and obtain a degree. The Service Provider subject position parallels these characteristics of the Client that instructors spoke about. In my interpretation, the Service Provider is at once expected to remedy the client's passivity, as they felt pressure to motivate and edutain students, while also

fulfilling the active demands the imagined Client has for an efficient and instrumental transfer of knowledge from expert to novice. This social relationship between Clients and Service Providers presents an invitation to sociology that is void of "dialogue" in the Freirian sense. For Freire, "dialogue" refers to a particular kind of epistemological relationship where both student and teacher enter the interaction with an organic curiosity about the specific "object" they share (Macedo 2008: 18). This understanding of dialogue is, unfortunately, absent in the invitation to sociology that occurs between Clients and Service Providers. Rather in this relationship, sociological knowledge is reduced to "data" that flows from one party into the other who will recall this "information" at a later date. As an invitation to sociology, this initiates a relationship that is characterized by mere recitation and lacks any synthesis on the part of the student: knowledge becomes something that is to be received, recognized and then recited on examination. This relationship is hierarchically-organized, between the naïve and the expert and between the entitled consumer and the subservient service provider. Most generally, this invitation to sociology reaffirms bureaucratic and neoliberalist ideologies of the contemporary university within which the discipline of sociology exists. In working with instructors I found that their invitations to the discipline were significantly constrained by institutional policies and precedents beyond their immediate control. Dorothy Smith's discussion of the ontology of large organizations helps capture how the instructor's I worked with were subject to organizational policies that mediated their construction of an invitation to

sociology. She writes about the relationship between a given course and the nature of organization texts:

> …the course itself is a site at which the university's complex of authorized and authorizing texts connects through the course substances…the texts both regulate (though they do not *prescribe*) and appropriate people's activities as organizational/institutional actions performed by people who can be named as members of an organization/institutional category (2001: 189).

While instructors are necessarily subject to institutional policies contained within institutional texts, those I worked with demonstrated their ability to resist, question or "play" with these precedents. These policies can be interpreted and appropriated in different ways thus, once again, highlighting the productive sense-making work that instructors engage in as they construct an invitation to sociology. I recognized instructors' resistance to these institutional precedents as they described these subject positions as somewhat "recent" developments (at least not as prevalent when they were students) and as "problems" that they were grappling with, As instructors imagined their relationship to these institutional constraints in different ways, the potential for creative appropriation becomes evident and a second generalizable discourse that involves Engaged Learners, Sherpa and a very different invitation to sociology can be seen.

My interpretation of Engaged Learners suggests that an invitation to sociology can be thought of as a process whereby student's lives are wed to the discipline of sociology and the instructor is one who can aid students in exploring this new territory. Beginning from the knowledge and motivation to learn that

students bring to the classroom, instructors spoke of Engaged learners as capable of participating in Freire's dialogue. Instructors' interpretations of Engaged Learners focused on self-motivation and an interest in the subject matter that extends beyond obtaining an easy "A" in the course. The Engaged Learner that instructors spoke about is not registered in the course for merely instrumental ends; instead this student is open to the opportunity to engage in Freire's dialogue. Instructors described their role as Sherpa in terms of an intimate relationship to Engaged Learners: the act of offering advice, using pop culture examples and providing students with the opportunity to explore sociology through written assignments are three practices through which instructors supported a potential for dialogue. The relationship here between Engaged Learners and Sherpa participates in an invitation that introduces students to a sociology that can be thought of as a kind of intellectual journey and not merely a transmission of data from one party to another. Within this interpretation, Engaged Learners and Sherpa climb the social world and the discipline of sociology *together*, the relationship to knowledge is not merely instrumental nor is there an absolute hierarchical division between the two parties. Instructors' understanding of their short reflexive assignments positions sociological knowledge as something that is to be worked with or worked through by students and not merely received and stored away for recitation later. Although this relationship acknowledges an instructor's mastery of the subject matter and the inexperience of the student, there remains a relationship of mutuality in which students have the opportunity to assert their increasing intellectual prowess through negotiation, debate and

argument. This invitation to sociology initiates a situation where students are able to see the sociological imagination at work and knowledge can be thought of as having transformative potential. Although this invitation was preferred by those I worked with, a lack of institutional resources signified a major obstacle that diminishes the likelihood that instructors were able to fully materialize this in their introductory course.

In short, this project has focused on how invitations to sociology are events constituted by an instructors' understanding of their students, institutional precedents, their presentation of self, and negotiation of existing discourses. Considering the large volume of data I derived from this rather small "slice" of the introductory course, I think it is fair to suggest that additional work into how the discipline of sociology is "constituted in social relations like those it studies" (Game and Metcalfe 1996: 2) is warranted. Future research should however, take into consideration some of the limitations of this project. Firstly, in a larger-scale project it would be useful to extend data collection beyond the first few days of the course. Although this would broaden the focus beyond first invitations, observation of additional lectures and ongoing interviews could offer insight into the evolution of the course as well as the trajectory from the initial invitation. Secondly, as I did not include any work with the students of the Introductory Sociology course, future inquiry could consider how students receive or interpret an invitation to sociology that is constructed by the instructor. Incorporating this element into future research would not be motivated by a desire to verify or corroborate instructors' interpretation of this event but would offer an additional

set of interpretations of this social event. The inclusion of data from students, possibly collected via focus groups, would also add nuance to an interactionist analysis of this social event. Thirdly, as this project has been my invitation to negotiating research ethics, my future research will ensure that participant consent is approached as an ongoing process rather than a discrete event captured in a consent form. Given the potentially sensitive nature of our conversations in interview, participant consent is an issue that ought to be renegotiated at various stages during the research process. Lastly, I am left grappling with how to understand the ethical demands for anonymity and confidentiality that I complied with to pursue this project. This research could not possibly have been pursued without some guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality however; I have made a politically and ideologically charged decision in agreeing to pursue research under these conditions. I feel troubled by the possibility that the set of decisions I made early on regarding anonymity and confidentiality may risk reinforcing the idea that teaching in sociology is an issue that is only spoken about behind closed doors, with select "trusted" audiences[30]. I feel conflicted about this insofar as this anonymity has come to resemble something like secrecy or deception, which I fear may contribute to the "war zone" (Tompkins 1996: 189) collegiality that instructors were fearful of. This tension has encouraged me to re-imagine research designs and methodologies that bolster my desire to create academic work

---

[30] This seems to most often refer to audiences that are sympathetic to ones own position, though this is only speculation on my part.

communities where we treat colleagues (especially incoming faculty) as travelling companions, rather than enemy combatants.

Building upon this last reflection, it would be valuable to consider future research that incorporates focus groups with Introductory Sociology instructors. Although I have offered two generalized discourses that capture instructors' understanding of their invitation to sociology, one could better understand these discourses *in-use* within a group setting. Conversation between participants could better refine the discourses while also offering additional insight into how the discourses I have discussed operate at material levels as instructors create an invitation to sociology. Although discourses exist at a symbolic register, it is through them that individuals come to make sense of the world and their own concrete actions. Although these discourses have been discussed within "tidy" titled sections, focus group work could help show how instructors simultaneously work with and against these discourses, project them upon others, and use them to understand and guide their own actions. While focus groups could help discuss the concrete manifestations of discourse, I also feel that the interactions between instructors would help explore the emotional identifications made with these abstract interpretations. Incorporation of this method could also help highlight the politically productive nature of invitations to sociology as conversations between instructors may help draw out their intentions and hopes in utilizing a particular practice. As Goffman emphasizes the importance of initial social interactions; the invitations to sociology that I have discussed may act as "foreshadowing" to

future interactions that are constrained by a limited range of possible subject positions.

These discourses however are not absolute, nor are they dogmatically adhered to without question, those I worked with struggled with tensions; weaving and negotiating their invitation to sociology through these ways of understanding the world. Similarly, the discourses that I have offered remain subject to readers' interpretations and negotiations. Thus I would like to close this work by inviting readers to struggle with the interpretations I have presented and to think about how they may intersect with their work, teaching, and learning experiences. I would like readers to consider this work as a provocation for Freirian dialogue; this chapter is not really a conclusion, but hopefully an invitation to thinking further about introductions to sociology. To do this, readers are invited to treat this text like a rented apartment: the reader, as renter, is welcomed to make this text habitable and to unfold the stories contained here with their own experiential baggage and conceptual structures (Game and Metcalfe 1996: 143). In this way, reading is "not simply a consumption of a pre-given meaning", rather this interaction is both an "eating" and a "cooking" (Game and Metcalfe 1996: 127). Rather than seeing reading as a "hazardous passage" (Stake 1994: 241) from writer to reader, I hope that readers will appropriate this work in light of other cases, experiences and commitments they hold. When readers are thought of as creative architects of the texts they encounter, they are empowered to "add and subtract, invent and shape – [to] reconstruct…knowledge in ways that leave [the text] differently connected and more likely to be personally useful"

(Stake 1994: 241). In this way, I offer this text in hopes that people will work with it and build conversations or positions in reference to it, even if these interpretations are contrary to my own allegiances. In this sense then, readers should not 'take my word for it' rather, my interpretations should be unpacked, rearranged, contested, and refigured to "take on some of the conceptual uniqueness of the reader" (Stake 1994: 24). I hope to have created the conditions for readers to use this text as a tool to "crack[] open" (Van Maanen 1988: 102) conversations that consider invitations to sociology as social products that are constantly undergoing construction and re-construction.

References

Abercrombie, N. et al. (2000). <u>Dictionary of Sociology.</u> London, England:

Penguin Group.

Altheide, D. & Johnson, J. (1994). Criteria for Assessing Interpretive Validity in

Qualitative Research. In Denzin and Lincoln (Eds.), <u>Handbook of</u>

<u>Qualitative Research.</u> (pp 485-499). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Publications.

Althusser, L. (2008). <u>On Ideology</u>. New York, NY: Verso.

Apple, M. (1990). <u>Ideology and Curriculum.</u> (2nd Ed.) New York, NY: Routledge.

Aoki, D. (2008). Teaching as Killing the Self or Why Professors Deserve to be

Beaten. In A. Fidyk, J. Wallin and K. den Heyer (Eds.), <u>Democratizing</u>

<u>Educational ExperienceL Envisioning, Embodying, Enacting.</u> (pp. 4-17).

Troy, NY: Educator's International Press Inc.

Ardovini-Brooker, J. (2003). <u>It's Cold and Lovely at the Middle: Discrimination</u>

<u>Against Female Graduate Teaching Assistants</u>. Lanham MD: University

Press of America.

Babchuk, N. & Keith, B. (1995). Introducing the Discipline: The Scholarly

Content of Introductory Texts. <u>Teaching Sociology,</u> 23, 215-225.

Bannerji, H. et al. (1991). <u>Unsettling Relations: The university as a Site of</u>

<u>Feminist Struggles.</u> Toronto, ON: Women's Press.

Bauman, Z. (2000). <u>Modernity and the Holocaust.</u> Ithaca, NY: Cornell University

Press.

Berger, P.L. (1963). Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective. New

York, NY: Anchor Books.

Bonner, K. (Spring 1990). Motivation and the Desire to Learn: A

Phenomenological Examination of the Teacher-Student Relation in the

Context of a Liberal Arts Philosophy. Dianoia, 1, (1), 18-35.

Bourdieu, P. (1988). Homo Academicus. Stanford, CA: Stanford University

Press.

Britzman, D.P. (2003). Practice Makes Practice: A Critical Study of Learning to

Teach. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Britzman, D.P. (2004). Monsters in Literature. Changing English. 11: 2, 253-265.

Brouillette, J. and Turner, R. (1992). Creating the Sociological Imagination on

the First Day of Class: The Social Construction of Deviance. Teaching

Sociology, 20, 276-279.

Burawoy, M. (2007). For Public Sociology. In Clawson et al (Eds.) Public

Sociology: Fifteen Eminent Sociologists Debate Politics and the

Profession in the Twenty-first Century. (pp.23-64). Berkeley, California:

University of California Press.

Brym, R. (2009). Why I Teach Intro. Academic Matters, February-March 2009,

13-15.

Crotty, M. (1998). The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective

in the Research Process. London: Sage.

Denzin, N. (1994). The Art and Politics of Interpretation. In Denzin and Lincoln (Eds.), <u>Handbook of Qualitative Research.</u> (pp 500-515). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (Eds.) (1994). <u>Handbook of Qualitative Research.</u> Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Dorn, D. (1987). The First Day of Class: Problems and Strategies. <u>Teaching Sociology</u>, 15, 61-72.

Flyvbjerg, B. (2004). Five Misunderstandings about Case-Study Research. In Seale et al (Eds.), <u>Qualitative Research Practice</u>. (pp 420-432). London, UK: Sage.

Flyvbjerg, B. (2007). <u>Making Social Science Matter: Why Social Inquiry Fails and how it can Succeed Again.</u> (S. Sampson, Trans.). New York, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Freire, P. (2008). <u>Pedagogy of the Oppressed. (30th Anniversay Ed.).</u> (M. Bergman Ramos, Trans). New York, NY: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc.

Game, A. & Metcalfe. (1996). <u>Passionate Sociology</u>. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Giddens, A. (1984). <u>The Constitution of Society.</u> Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

Giddens, A. (1987). <u>Social Theory and Modern Sociology.</u> Oxford, UK: Polity Press.

Giddens, A. (1993). <u>The Giddens Reader.</u> (P. Cassell, Ed.). Stanford, CA:

Stanford University Press.

Giroux, H. A. (2001). Introduction: Critical Education or Training: Beyond the

Commodification of Higher Education. In Giroux and Myrsiades (Eds.),

<u>Beyond the Corporate University.</u> (pp 1-12). Lanham, MD: Rowman &

Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Goffman, E. (1959). <u>The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life</u>. New York, NY:

Anchor Books.

Gomm, R. (2009). <u>Key Concepts in Socail Research Methods.</u> New York, NY:

Palgrave MacMillan.

Grauerholz, L. and Gibson, G. (2006). Articulation of Goals and Means in

Sociology Courses: What we can Learn from Syllabi. <u>Teaching Sociology</u>,

34, 5-22.

Guba, E. & Lincoln, Y. (1994). Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research. In

Denzin and Lincoln (Eds.), <u>Handbook of Qualitative Research.</u> (pp 105-

117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Halasz, J. R. & Kaufman, P. (2008). Sociology as Pedagogy: How Ideas from the

Discipline Can Inform Teaching and Learning. Teaching Sociology, vol.

36, no. 4, pp. 301-317.

Hall, E. J. (2000). Packaging Poverty as an Intersection of Class, Race, and

Gender in Introductory Textbooks, 1982 to 1994. <u>Teaching Sociology</u>, 28,

299-315.

Heald, S. (1991). Pianos to Pedagogy: Pursuing the Educational Subject. In.
    Bannerji et al (Eds.), <u>Unsettling Relations: The University as a Site of</u>
    <u>Feminist Struggles</u> (pp.129-149). Toronto, ON: Women's Press.

Henslin, J. et al. (2010). <u>Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach.</u> (5th Canadian
    Ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

Holstein, J. & Gubrium, J. (1994). Phenomenology, Ethnomethodology, and
    Interpretive Practice. In Denzin and Lincoln (Eds.), <u>Handbook of</u>
    <u>Qualitative Research.</u> (pp 262-272). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
    Publications.

Howard, P. (2005). "The Look" in Teacher's Performance Evaluation In M. van
    Manen (Ed.), in <u>Writing in the Dark: Phenomenological Studies in</u>
    <u>Interpretive Inquiry.</u> (pp. 50-60). London, ON: The Althouse Press.

Hudd, S. (2003). Syllabus Under Construction: Involving Students in the
    Creation of Class Assignments. <u>Teaching Sociology</u>, 31, 195-202.

Hunt, L. (February 2010). How Writing Leads to Thinking (And not the other
    way around). <u>Perspectives on History.</u> Online Access:
    <u>http://www.historians.org/perspectives/</u>
    <u>issues/2010/1002/1002art1.cfm?utm_source=JoVanEvery.ca+Newsletter</u>
    <u>&utm_campaign=9d77e360ba-</u>
    <u>NEWSLETTER_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email</u>

Kant, I. (2001) <u>Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics.</u> (2nd Ed. J. Ellington,
    Ed.) Indianapolis, IN: Hacket Publishing.

Kaufman, P. (1997). Michael Jordon Meets C. Wright Mills: Illustrating the

    Sociological Imagination with Objects from Everyday Life. <u>Teaching</u>

    <u>Sociology</u>, 25, 309-314.

Kendall, D. et al. (2007). <u>Sociology in Our Times.</u> (4th Canadian Ed.).

    Scarborough, ON: Nelson Education Ltd.

Kincheloe, J. & McLaren, P. (1994). Rethinking Critical Theory and Qualitative

    Research. In Denzin and Lincoln (Eds.), <u>Handbook of Qualitative</u>

    <u>Research.</u> (pp 138-157). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Lewis, T. and Humphrey, C. (2005). Sociology and the Environment: An

    Analysis of Coverage in Introductory Sociology Textbooks. <u>Teaching</u>

    <u>Sociology</u>, 33, 154-169.

Macedo, D. (2008). Introduction. In Freire, <u>Pedagogy of the Oppressed.</u> (pp 11-

    27). New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc.

Martin, S. (2002). The Intertwining of Voice and Structure: Reflections on

    Teaching and Learning. In E. Mirochnik & D. Sherman (Ed.), <u>Passion</u>

    <u>and Pedagogy: Relation, Creation, and Transformation in Teaching.</u> (pp.

    301-315). New York: Peter Lang.

Marquez, S. A. (1994). Distorting the Image of "Hispanic" Women in Sociology:

    Problematic Strategies of Presentation in the Introductory Text. <u>Teaching</u>

    <u>Sociology</u>, 22, 231-236.

McHugh, P. (Spring 1992). A Letter of Resignation. <u>Dianoia, 2</u>, (2), 106-111.

Meighan, R. & Siraj-Blatchford. (2003). <u>A Sociology of Educating.</u> (4th Ed.).New

    York, NY: Continuum.

Mills, C. W. (2000). <u>The Sociological Imagination.</u> New York, New York:

    Oxford University Press.

Ohliger, J. (2009). <u>Challenging the Professionalization of Adult Education: John</u>

    <u>Ohliger and Contradictions in Modern Practice. (A. Grace, T. Rocco</u> and

    Associates, Eds.) SanFrancisco, CA: Josey-Bass: A Wiley Imprint.

Palmer, P. (1998). <u>The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a</u>

    <u>Teacher's Life.</u> San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Pocklington, T. and Tupper, A. (2002). <u>No Place To Learn.</u> Vancouver, British

    Columbia: UBC Press.

Ross, K. (1991). Translator's Introduction. In J. Ranciere, <u>The Ignorant</u>

    <u>Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation.</u> (pp vii-xxiii.).

    Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Readings, B. (1996). <u>The University in Ruins.</u> Cambridge, MA: Harvard

    University Press.

Richardson, L. (1997). <u>Fields of Play: Constructing an Academic Life.</u> New

    Brunswick: NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Schaefer, R. Et al. (2009). <u>Sociology.</u> (2nd Canadian Ed.). Toronto, ON: McGraw-

    Hill Ryerson.

Schwandt, T. (1994). Constructivist, Interpretivist Approaches to Human Inquiry.

    In Denzin and Lincoln (Eds.), <u>Handbook of Qualitative Research.</u> (pp 118-

    137). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Shanner, L. (October 16, 2009). Panel Discussion from Pedagogical Provocations

    Citizenship, Social Responsibility, and a University Education: What is

the Connection?, Edmonton, AB. Online access:

http://www.ctl.ualberta.ca/OctoberForum_000.html.

Simons, H. (2009). <u>Case Study Research in Practice.</u> Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Publications Inc.

Smith, D. (2001). Texts and the Ontology of Organizations and Institutions.

<u>Studies in Cults, Orgs., and Socs.</u> 7, 159-198.

Stake, R. (1994). Case Studies. In Denzin and Lincoln (Eds.), <u>Handbook of</u>

<u>Qualitative Research.</u> (pp 236-247). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Publications.

Stolley, K. and Hill, A. (1996). Presentations of the Elderly in Textbooks on

Marriage and Family. <u>Teaching Sociology</u>, 24, 34-45.

Suarez, A. and Balaji, A. (2007). Coverage and Representations of Sexuality in

Introductory Sociology Textbooks. <u>Teaching Sociology</u>, 35, 239-254.

Taub, D. and Fanflik, P. (2000). The Inclusion of Disability in Introductory

Sociology Textbooks. <u>Teaching Sociology</u>, 28, 12-23.

Tompkins, J. (1996). <u>A Life in School: What the Teacher Learned.</u> New York,

NY: Basic Books.

Van Maanen, J. (1988). <u>Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography.</u> Chicago, Il :

The University of Chicago Press.

Van Manen, M. (1990). <u>Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an</u>

<u>Action Sensitive Pedagogy</u>. London, ON: The Althouse Press.

Van Manen, M. (2005). <u>Writing in the Dark: Phenomenological Studies in</u>

<u>Interpretive Inquiry.</u> London, ON: The Althouse Press.

Winston, F. (2007). First Day Sociology: Using Student Introductions to Illustrate

    the Concept of Norms. <u>Teaching Sociology</u>, 35, 161-165.

Wirth, L. (1936) Preface. In K. Mannheim, <u>Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction</u>

    <u>to the Sociology of Knowledge.</u> (pp. x-xxx). New York, NY: Harcourt,

    Inc.

Wodak, Ruth (2007). Critical Discourse Analysis. In Seale et al (Eds.),

    <u>Qualitative Research Practice.</u> (pp 185-201). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

    Publications Ltd.