KEY IDEAS
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SOCIAL IDENTITY

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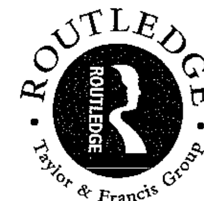

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implicated in each other. An appreciation of social identity is vital if we are to steer the structuration debate – concerned with linking analytically micro and macro, structure and agency, collectivity and individual – out of its present doldrums. In any society, organised processes of identification are central to the allocation of rewards and penalties, resources and costs, honour and stigma; they are at the heart of the social construction of hierarchy and social stratification. Furthermore, since the degree to which social identity is organised is likely to be a function of social complexity – scale and institutional heterogeneity – there is also something to be said in this respect about modernity and social identity. These issues are taken further in the closing chapters.

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Organising identities

The English word 'organisation' can refer to the *act* of organis*ing*, to the state of *being* organis*ed*, or to an organis*ed* system. Each meaning emphasises social activity, process and practice. Organisations are bounded networks of people – distinguished as members from non-members – following coordinated procedures: *doing* things *together* in inter-related and institutionalised ways. These procedures are specified explicitly or tacitly, formal or informally, in bodies of organisational knowledge: organisationally specific symbolic universes, which may be subject to revision or confirmation and are transmitted to members through processes of organisational socialisation. Organisations are also networks of identifications – individually and collectively – which influence strongly who does what within those procedures, and how. These identifications – positions, offices, functions, jobs, etc. – are specified informally and formally by and in organisational knowledge, as are the procedures for allocating or recruiting individuals to them.

Understood in this way, everything from families to nation-states (and beyond) can be described as organisations. If so, doesn't this suggest that the term is too vague and general to have analytical value? I don't think so. First, as discussed in the previous chapter,

not all institutions are organisations. Second, not all collectivities are organisations. Categories, for example – collectivities which cannot speak, do not in fact know, their own name – are not organisations. Nor are spontaneous collectivities (crowds, audiences, mobs, refugees in flight, etc.). Nor are loosely knit networks of individuals pursuing the same or congruent goals but lacking organised divisions of labour or authority structures (Boissevain 1968; Mayer 1966). The word 'organisation' covers most collectivities, but not all.

In terms of identity, organisations are constituted simultaneously in a distinction between members and non-members, on the one hand, and in an internal network of differentiation among members, on the other. An organisation without internal differentiation doesn't make much sense: organisation *is* the harnessing and orchestration, under a symbolic umbrella, of difference. Thus between the members of any organisation there is a relationship of similarity and a range of relationships of difference.

If organisations were only concerned with their own internal affairs they would be of limited sociological interest. However, organisational members rarely live their lives all day and every day wholly within the organisation: the 'total institution' (Goffman 1968b) is the exception rather than the rule. Nor are most people members of only one organisation. Furthermore, an organisation's *raison d'être* is the coordination of the activities of a plurality of individuals – not all of whom will necessarily be members – in collective pursuit of some specified purpose. This defining purpose is the organisational charter; it is what calls the organisation into existence, and is another element of the organisationally specific symbolic universe. Such purposes are, however, typically located in a wider, external social world. Organisations are open to and part of their social environments. Their boundaries may be permeable and osmotic; it isn't always easy to see where they are drawn.

One other defining feature of organisations requires emphasis. Without relations of authority (or, indeed, power), the successful coordination of activities would not be possible. Some subordination to others is the reciprocal precondition of individual autonomy, in the same way as similarity is the precondition of difference (and rules of deviance). Organisations – small or large – are institutionalised networks of hierarchical relationships, of sub- and superordination, of power and authority. Organisational collectivity is, in fact, the source of the legitimacy without which authority carries no weight.

For the purposes of this discussion, I will concentrate on two aspects of organisations:[1] first, the ways in which individuals become identified as organisational members (and as particular organisational members), and second, the ways in which organisations influence the identification of non-members. Surveying the historical, cross-cultural, and institutional variety of either, let alone both, would be a task more appropriate to an encyclopaedia. Instead, in order to illustrate the range of possibilities, I shall discuss a limited selection of procedural types or cases with respect to each, as examples of general organisational processes. I will also discuss the consequential nature of organisational identification with respect to the lives of individuals and the production and reproduction of patterns of social differentiation: hierarchy, stratification, inclusion and exclusion, etc. In this chapter I focus on organisations and their members; in the next, on their impact on non-members.

Without personnel renewal and replacement, the life-span of any organisation could be no longer than that of its most long-lived individual member. Since a characteristic of organisations is that they can persist despite routine attrition of personnel, procedures for recruiting replacement members are vital. There are two basic trajectories of organisational membership. In the first, the qualifying criteria of recruitment are 'givens' such as parentage, age and position in the life course, gender, etc. These identities are socially constructed – typically in terms of embodiment and folk notions of biology – as basic, natural, or primordial. They are typically also collective: they identify the individual as a member of a group or category. They are understood socially as aspects of the individual for which she has little or no responsibility, and over which she has little or no control. Although in any specific situation the possibilities may exist of a renunciation of membership by a candidate, a refusal to recognise a candidate, or her subsequent expulsion, organisational membership of this kind is generally taken-for-granted, even if not inevitable. If a boy wants to join the Scouts, for example, his age and gender render him unproblematically eligible.

In the second trajectory, criteria of membership may be many and varied, but membership is not entailed in pre-existent personal characteristics. It is also much more a matter concerning the individual *as* an individual. Membership is, therefore, always to some degree uncertain and must typically be sought and endorsed; it is a matter of negotiation at the organisational boundary, and

more or less competitive. However, the presence or absence of self-determination and choice is not a defining feature. Both trajectories can involve involuntary or imposed organisational membership.

The two different routes into organisational membership may be characterised thus: in the first an individual is a member or a prospective member by virtue of *who* she is, in the second by virtue of *what* she is. Often seen, erroneously, as a contrast between 'traditional' and 'modern' modes of social identity, this has much in common with the distinction between *ascribed* and *achieved* statuses drawn by Linton (1936) in his original formulation of status and role.[2] Ascribed identities are socially constructed on the basis of the contingencies of birth. Achieved (or, to adopt Merton's subsequent and more accurate terminology, *acquired*) identities are assumed during the subsequent life course, and are generally – although not necessarily – the outcome of a degree of self-direction. This general distinction between the ascribed and the acquired is not specific to organisational identifications; it can in principle, be applied to all social identities.

The key distinction of this discussion, between the *internal* and *external* moments of the dialectic of identification, is heuristic, drawn as an opposition for explanatory purposes. Much the same can be said about ascription and achievement/acquisition. In everyday life the difference between them is likely to be at most a matter of emphasis. Organisational membership, no less than any other identity, is thus a particular combination of the acquired and the ascribed. The ins and outs of biography conspire to ensure that who I am and what I am are not easily disentangled.

This can be explored a bit further. Primary identities such as gender, rooted in very early social experience, are massively implicated in the embodied point of view of selfhood. Following Linton and Merton, they are ascribed identities and criteria of organisational membership. But they are also – *qua* selfhood – important influences upon the self-direction that can be so influential in the achievement of identity. However, the purposeful acquisition of achieved organisational identities depends upon more than unilateral self-determination. Most significantly, it involves negotiation and transaction with others – organisational gatekeepers of one kind or another – who are in a position to recruit individuals to the organisation or to exclude them, and to decide to which organisational positions individuals will be recruited. In making their choices, gatekeepers will frequently have recourse to (ascriptive) criteria such as gender or age. Where acquired

organisational identities are *imposed* on *non*-members – such as selection for conscription or imprisonment – ascriptive criteria are likely to be particularly influential. Imposition can evoke many possible responses. It may not produce any apparent reaction at all; it may be internalised; it may be resentfully endured; it may spark resistance. But as long as categorisation is recognised by those upon whom it is visited, or produces consequences in their lives, it is never a question of imposition *only*. Whatever it might be, there is always a response; there is always the dialectic between internal and external identification.

Indeed, *all* the above scenarios can be understood with reference to an internal–external dialectic of identification, albeit with different emphases in each case. In each there is a relationship of mutual signification between the ascribed and the achieved/acquired. Even so, a loose analytical distinction between ascribed and acquired identities continues to make sense, and particularly, perhaps, with respect to organisational identity. They differ – as Nadel, for example, seems to have appreciated (1957: 36–41) – in the manner in which individuals assume them. With respect to organisations, this difference is largely (which doesn't mean only) procedural. Recruitment to organisational identities where the emphasis falls upon ascription is a matter of *affirmation*. Membership is immanent; it must be publicly confirmed, registered, solemnised, consecrated, or whatever. Recruitment to organisational identities which are achieved or acquired is, however, a matter of *rationalisation* (cf. Collinson *et al.* 1990: 110ff.). Membership must be justified, reasons have to be offered. Affirmation and rationalisation reflect different sources or kinds of legitimate authority. In Max Weber's terms (1978: 212–41), affirmation is rooted in *traditional* understandings of legitimacy, and rationalisation – unsurprisingly – in *rational-legal* legitimacy.

Affirmation can take many forms. The Christian ritual of confirmation or First Communion, in which the young person is received into full membership of the Church, is one example. The Jewish *Bar Mitzvah* and *Bat Mitzvah* rituals also come to mind (Mars 1990). And there are options other than the strictly religious: many societies around the world could be drawn upon to provide examples of life-course rituals in which young people are initiated into organised age-sets of one kind or another (Bernardi 1985; La Fontaine 1985). Coming-of-age ceremonies often touch upon more than the membership of specific organisations: 'These rites of initiation transform individuals by investing them with socialness'

(A. P. Cohen 1994: 57). It may be nothing less than full membership of the society in question which is at issue (see Richards [1956] for one of the classic anthropological accounts). Although the ritual dimensions of coming of age have atrophied in the industrialised societies of modernity, they can still be found, for example, in the notion of the 'key of the door', or in the informal humiliations which often attend the 'last night of freedom' of brides- and grooms-to-be.

More obviously organisational memberships can also depend primarily on the ascription of 'who you are'. In rural Northern Ireland, for example, membership of the Orange Lodge depends upon as many as three ascriptive criteria: being protestant, being male, and apropos *which* Lodge one joins, family (R. Harris 1972: 163, 192–4). And if we recognise the family as an informal organisation – or even, in the bureaucratised modern state, as a formal organisation – then the rite of baptism, for example, is *inter alia* a public affirmation of the full organisational membership of a new infant.

Common to all of the above is a transition from immanent membership to actual membership – literally, confirmation – and an element of ritualised initiation. These are important dimensions of rites of passage, a general category of ritual first identified by Arnold van Gennep nearly a century ago (van Gennep 1965). Building on his ideas, there is now a relatively settled anthropological consensus that humans experience life as a series of social transitions from one identity to another, that these transitions are ritualised to a greater or lesser extent, and that the transitions have a tripartite form (Leach 1976: 77–9; Morris 1987: 246–63). That form is not a structural universal, it simply makes sense logically and situationally: first *separation* from the present state or identity; then *transition* or *liminality* (a state of limbo which may draw upon a symbolised vocabulary or repertoire relating to death); then finally *incorporation* into, or *aggregation* with, the new state or identity (which may use birth as a metaphor). In ritual, these phases may be represented spatially; they always have a temporal sequence, one after the other. A processual structure of this kind appears in all explicit and organisationally marked identity transitions.

Rites of passage and the internal-external dialectic of identification have a bearing on each other. The enhancement of experience which ritual offers, cognitively and particularly emotionally, plays an important role in the internalisation of identification. To say this, is, in most significant respects, to agree with Durkheim about the power of ritualised communion. Ritual can invest the symbols of organisational membership – flags, uniforms, logos, songs, etc. – with an affective weight that transcends occasion or ceremony. It is likely to be of particular moment in generating individual internal identification with the external collectivity: making the recruit *feel* that she belongs and is part of the greater organisational whole. It may also distance her from previous identities. Even the formal pattern of separation, transition and incorporation is amenable to interpretation in this light: separation weakens existing internal self-identification(s); during transition the new identity is introduced 'from outside' and dramatised; incorporation affirms and strengthens the new identification.

Victor Turner (1974: 119ff.), inspired by the theologian Martin Buber, understood that although the 'we' of collective identification is enormously powerful, it is always fragile and contingent, always vulnerable to subversion. In my terms, it is imagined but not imaginary. Among other things, this reflects a contradiction between the egalitarian inclusiveness of 'us' and the internal hierarchical differentiation of an organisational division of labour. Similarity and difference play against rather than with each other within organisations. Hence the organisational importance of rituals of identity transformation and initiation. While these are generally significant as occasions for acting out and practically participating in the symbolisation of identity, they are particularly momentous in combining an affirmation and re-affirmation of what Turner calls 'communitas' – undifferentiated 'we-ness', if you like – with a recognition and legitimation of internal organisational structure.

Ritualised affirmation of ascriptive identity is not only a matter of individual membership, however, nor is it confined to initiation or recruitment. In addition to rites of passage, there are many other ritual occasions which organise, orchestrate and *re*affirm collective identities. Public pageantry provides many obvious examples of rituals of communal affirmation. From the great totalitarian set-pieces of state occasions in the USSR (Lane 1981), to the more modest ceremonial of 'traditional' African states (Gluckman 1963: 110–36), to the parades of the protestant 'marching season' in Northern Ireland (Bell 1990), the theme is similar: the public reaffirmation and consecration of ascriptive collective identities. Similar themes can be discerned in more secular rituals (Moore and Myerhoff 1977) such as carnivals (A. Cohen 1980) or beauty

contests (Wilk 1993). Organised collective identities which claim to be more than merely socially constructed are also likely – for both internal and external consumption – to use ritualised public ceremonial to affirm and symbolise their a-historical essence. Examples of this include the characteristic and inevitable carnivals of nationalism, and festivals such as the gay and lesbian Mardi Gras in Sydney, Australia.

As well as being an analytical category, social class is an ascriptive identity of sorts. Class is equated in common sense with 'background', referring to family of origin, and often with 'breeding' too. A sophisticated version of this is the argument – with which the Eugenics movement, for example, identified itself – that class differences reflect differential genetic endowments; a view which probably persists more widely than we know. A mirror-image of this, glorifying the essential nobility of working people, can be seen in Soviet socialist realist public art. Ceremonial or ritualised (re)affirmations of class identities are easy to exemplify: on the one hand, May Day marches of international solidarity, and the Durham Miners' Gala; on the other, Oxbridge May Balls and the set-pieces of the upper-class sporting and social circuits. It is no surprise that the middle class(es) – often in upwardly mobile flight from their 'background', generally thanks to achievement – appear less keen to affirm publicly the primordiality of their identity.

So, with respect to ascriptive identifications such as family, age, ethnicity, gender, and even class, ritual (re)affirmation is of considerable significance. It may actually be fundamental: identity – as a definitively social construct – can never be essential or primordial, so it has to be made to *seem* so. We have to be made to *feel* 'we'. Nor are collectivities embodied in quite the way that individuals are. In addition, the potential tension between ascriptive inclusion (similarity) and hierarchy (difference) should be borne in mind. These difficulties are all addressed when the power of symbol and ritual is brought to bear. Organised collective identity is endowed, via collective ritual and 'communitas', with personal authenticity and experiential profundity. Inasmuch as public ritual is performative, it is a powerful and visible embodiment of the abstraction of collective identity (cf. Connerton 1989: 41–71). Rituals gather together enough members for embodied collectivity to be socially 'real'. The individual – whether participating as an individual or as 'one of the crowd' – is included in the organised collectivity in the most potent fashion. Individual diversity finds

a place within symbolised unity. The imagined ceases to be imaginary.

Ascription is, however, as much a principle of exclusion as inclusion; it encourages expulsion as well as recruitment. The refusal to admit women, Jews, and black people – and these are only the most obvious cases – to membership of exclusive clubs is one such situation. More consequential are the less thorough-going but none the less significant discriminations which operate in the labour and education markets of a country such as Britain. At its most comprehensive, ascriptive exclusion can plumb the depths reached by various regimes of slavery, by the Republic of South Africa during the period of *apartheid*, or by the racialised state created in Nazi Germany.

We are now approaching situations in which important elements of rationalisation figure. The point that ascription and achievement/acquisition are not easy to disentangle in everyday life can be made in many ways. Ascriptive exclusion may, for example, define the arena within which the principle of competition comes into play in recruitment. A club may not admit women, Jews or black people, but that doesn't mean that *any* white male can join. The choice of *which* white males is a matter for rationalisation, even if only at the level of procedural correctness. Ascriptive inclusion – the organisational boundary – may delineate the space within which internal position and office are competitively achieved. And there are subtler possibilities. An employer who would rather not hire black employees is not committed to hiring whites regardless of their capacity to do the job in question. But nor, in the absence of a white person fitting the bill, is she totally constrained from hiring a black worker. Rationalisation permits both options.

These examples illustrate the interaction of criteria of 'acceptability' and 'suitability' (R. Jenkins 1983: 100–28; 1986: 46–79). In competitive organisational recruitment, ascriptive criteria – 'who you are' – are most likely to influence the identification of acceptability, which can be broadly defined as whether or not an individual will 'fit in' to the social networks and relationships of the organisation, or be the right 'kind of person' in general. Suitability, however, emphasises achieved or acquired characteristics relating to 'what you are'. This is typically a matter of competence; however, it can also be, in voluntary organisations for example, a question of interests or attitudes. Suitability is more an issue when a particular organisational position, rather than just membership (or a broad category of membership), is at stake. Notions of

suitability are definitively involved in employment recruitment, for example, but are less likely to influence recruitment to club membership. Where both criteria are influential, permutations are possible: individuals may be suitable but unacceptable, or vice versa.

The distinction between suitability and acceptability is rarely clear-cut. Being apparently the most suitable person for an organisational position doesn't guarantee your recruitment to it. 'Whether your face fits' may contribute to colleaguely relations and, hence, to fulfilling the organisational charter. So is it a kind of competence? Suitability can't always be easily specified: there may be a number of equally suitable candidates; the threshold of suitability may be low. In situations such as these, questions of acceptability – now concerning the individual and the idiosyncratic, rather than the categorical – may once again become influential. And both suitability and acceptability offer a basis for competitive recruitment. There is no straightforward equivalence between the ascribed and the acceptable, or the acquired and the suitable. It is possible to argue that gender, for example, is sometimes a criterion of suitability. And acceptability can depend on factors such as marital or domestic situation, or attitudes to abortion or nuclear disarmament (or whatever), which are unlikely to be a matter of ascription. And so on.

There may be no straightforward equivalences, but there is a modern discourse which emphasises opportunity, achievement and access, particularly with respect to economic activity and benefits. Or there are, rather, two related modern discourses: of meritocracy and of equality. The two do not always make happy partners – the idea of meritocracy, for example, owes a frequently unacknowledged debt to notions of 'liberty' which are not readily compatible with equality – but they come together in the western democracies in the political project of equality of opportunity (Paul *et al.* 1987). This is relevant here because of its emphasis upon access for all to fair competitive organisational recruitment. From the point of view of the promotion of equality of opportunity, ascriptive criteria or criteria of acceptability require special justification.

And here we can begin to appreciate the importance of the organisation of identity for the production and reproduction of large-scale patterns of social differentiation and stratification. Ascriptive social identities are not only collective, they are typically widely recognised. Significant numbers of people agree on the nominal boundaries of male and female, black and white, etc. The

understandings of 'us' and 'them' across those boundaries – the virtual identifications – are less consensual; it depends on point of view. But the basic outlines, the scaffolding around which virtual identification – played out in the history of consequences – is constructed, will be relatively clear.

Ascription may be socially constructed as the inevitability of natural causes, but it isn't innocent of self-interest or competition for collective advantage. It informs widespread processes of social categorisation: the defining of others in the external moment of the dialectic of identification. Among those processes is recruitment into organisations. Organisational membership in any social context is therefore likely to reflect local ascriptive categories of identification. We know that this is often the case. At least two, analytically distinct, organisational processes produce this situation.

In the first, people organise themselves in terms of ascription: this is organisation for 'us', with 'us' understood in a particular way. The organisational charter defines membership: Poppleton *Working Men's* Club, the Eastend *Punjabi Youth* Association, Old Sarum University *Women's* Society, Boyne Square *Protestant* Defenders Flute Band, and so on. Organisation along these ascriptive lines is a potent political and economic resource. Among its advantages are an ideology of natural or primordial community and loyalty, the symbolisation and valorisation of identity, comradeship and mutual support, pooled resources, the organisation of collective action, and the creation of opportunities – jobs or whatever – or members.

In the second, the organisational charter does not define membership in ascriptive terms. It may in fact evince a commitment to competitive, achievement-based membership. However, those who are in a position to recruit or reject prospective members may draw upon ascriptive criteria in their decision-making. For example, a manager may refuse to employ men as production workers in a factory assembling electrical components, because he 'knows' that women are more dexterous, and don't want to work full-time, and that men can't tolerate the boredom. As a result of this managerial categorisation, the factory employs only women in the majority of jobs. If there is consistency in the working knowledge of managers in general – some participation in a shared symbolic universe – then their recruitment decisions will draw upon similar typifications and stereotypes, and will contribute to the production of a wider social pattern in which women are disproportionately represented in part-time, semi-skilled assembly work. Reflecting consistencies in *their*

recruitment and careers, managers *are* likely to have things in common: class background, 'race', gender, politics, orientation towards business, organisational and professional socialisation, etc. That they should behave similarly in similar circumstances is not remarkable. The process may be even more avowedly exclusionary than the example given: racism and sexism, for example, remain potent forces in recruitment (Collinson *et al.* 1990; R. Jenkins 1986). Organisations – and although I have focused on employing organisations, discrimination operates in many other areas – may be nominally open to all but virtually closed to many categories of the population, excluded on the basis of ascription.

There are too many other possibilities to explore here. One thing must, however, be emphasised, apropos acquired identities. People join organisations for many reasons: to validate an existing self-identification, to change it, or for other reasons more idiosyncratic. This applies in employment and across the spectrum of political and social activities. Distinctions between identity and other aspects of the person (whatever *that* means) are difficult to maintain. Does someone become a hunt saboteur because she is opposed to cruelty to foxes, because she likes the image of herself as a 'sab', because 'that'll really make my mother mad', because she can't stand 'upper-class pratts on horses', or because she fancies that 'bloke with the dreads'? It is not easy to know. But it all contributes to identity.

People also *form* organisations as vehicles for identity projects. This has already been suggested in the case of ascription; it is no less true for acquired identities. The organisational charter may refer to facilitating and improving the wider public understanding of train-spotting, or sado-masochism, or whatever, but that cannot be divorced from the train-spotters or sado-masochists who are the members, and their cause(s). And many of the advantages that accrue in the case of organisations based on ascription – support, symbolisation, pooled resources, coordinated action – apply equally to organisations oriented around acquired identities.

Whether they emphasise ascription or acquisition, however, different organisations are of more or less moment in the implications of membership for individual identification. Scarcity is an obvious factor. Joining the Mickey Mouse Club, where the only qualification for membership is a small fee sent through the mail, is clearly less significant than finally, the day after your ninth birthday, having made yourself a pain in the neck for the last few months, being initiated as only the fifth member of your big brother's gang.

And exclusivity isn't just a matter of competitive scarcity: the membership criteria matter, too. Hence the power of ascription. In ascriptive theory, at least, you can only be in or out. The boundary between the two, dramatised as it often is by ritual, may also be the threshold between the sacred and the profane. On one side purity, on the other danger (Douglas 1966). Certainly other factors contribute to the strength of particular organisational identities – the affectiveness of initiation, external pressures on the group, the penalties attached to leaving, and so on – but the importance of exclusivity should not be underestimated.

Whatever the context, in competitive recruitment a degree of rationalisation is called for. This can be a matter of reasons, or a matter of procedure, or both. The question of reasons has already been discussed: is someone acceptable? and are they suitable? These are reasons. Procedures may not be easily separable from reasons, however. Sometimes procedural correctness provides sufficient legitimation for the outcome. That the proper procedure has been followed is reason enough.

A good example here is the *ordeal*, a category of ritual which figures in a variety of organisational initiations: from the theatrical pretension of the Masonic rite, to the violence of a motorcycle gang, to the psycho-sexual emotional trials of some New Guinean peoples, to the torment visited on new recruits to élite military units. In the ordeal, survival rationalises recruitment. As ritual, it dramatises and authenticates the achievement of membership, both for the recruit and for her or his new colleagues. In this sense it contributes to both internal and external identification. The other major context in which the ordeal figures historically – determination of guilt or innocence in the face of accusation[3] – also has serious implications for membership. An unfavourable outcome to a judgemental ordeal may result in expulsion from membership; recruitment may depend – and here we are back to initiation – upon satisfactory reputation or character.

More characteristic of modern organisational recruitment, however, is the *interview* and its associated screening procedures (although these may be experienced as an ordeal). Interviewing is rooted in the informally institutionalised or ritualised social world of Goffman's interaction order: one or more people talk to another person – this is a definitively oral social form – in order to find out sufficient about her to decide about her recruitment (or, indeed, whatever fate is in question). However, the organised interview has arguably become *the* generic form of bureaucratic

social encounter. Its only rival is the committee (and the two are, of course, combined in the board or panel). The bureaucratic interview has a number of characteristic features (see R. Jenkins 1986: 128–9, for more extended discussion). There are always two sides, interviewer(s) and interviewee(s). There is a situational hierarchy. One side – the interviewer – is typically in charge of the procedure and of the determination of outcomes. This hierarchy derives from the interviewer's organisational position (particularly her control over resources), and, often, from her possession of the requisite cultural competences to carry off interviewing authoritatively. The business of the interview is the allocation of resources or penalties to the interviewee; the legitimacy of that allocation is grounded in adherence to more or less formally constituted procedures and in the reasons which inform the decision-making. However, the interview is not necessarily about decision-making; it may be at least as much about the *ex post facto* justification or rationalisation of decision-making (Silverman and Jones 1976). Finally, interviews are generally private. The protection of privacy is extended as much – indeed more – to interviewer(s) as to interviewee; decisions can be made without the scrutiny of an audience. The ordeal, by contrast, is typically a public or semi-public event which *requires* an audience for its legitimacy.

The ordeal and the interview are not the only forms of rationalisation: recruitment by *election*, by *nomination*, or by *lottery* can be important too, drawing on specific legitimatory rhetorics of democracy, authority and chance. And rationalisation does not preclude affirmation. Once an individual's recruitment to an organisation has been rationalised, nothing prevents that decision being subsequently ceremonially affirmed. There is every reason for doing so, if the argument about the affective power of ritual is correct. Rationalised membership is as much in need of authenticity as any other. Existing members can have their membership re-affirmed and re-authenticated too. A good example is the 'team-building' which figures in staff development programmes in many employing organisations in western industrial societies. One common model is the 'residential': staff are taken away from work and home to spend a few days 'out of time', engaging together in a range of activities – from outdoor pursuits, to intensive group work, to equally intense socialising – after which they return home, ideally somewhat transformed (otherwise what is the point?). Separation, limbo, and (re)incorporation: the rite of passage analogy is irresistible.

These are some, but only some, of the ways in which organisations

affect the identities of their members. Organisations are, first and foremost, groups. As we proceed through life, our organisational memberships make a significant contribution to the diversity of the expanding portfolios that are our individual identities. The internal–external dialectic of identification can be seen at work between members, and between members and non-members. Organisations are constituted in the tension between solidary similarity, *vis-à-vis* outsiders, and the internal hierarchical differentiation of members from each other. Although the internal moment of group identification is a consistent and necessary thread of organisational identification, on balance categorisation – of outsiders by insiders, of members by other members – is the dominant theme of recruitment and initiation.