THE MUTUAL-FOCUS /

EMOTIONAL-ENTRAINMENT MODEL

AT THE CENTER OF AN INTERACTION RITUAL is the process in which participants develop a mutual focus of attention and become entrained in each other's bodily micro-rhythms and emotions. This chapter will present the details of this process in an explicit model of processes that take place in time: a fine-grained flow of micro-events that build up in patterns of split seconds and ebb away in longer periods of minutes, hours, and days. Rituals are constructed from a combination of ingredients that grow to differing levels of intensity, and result in the ritual outcomes of solidarity, symbolism, and individual emotional energy. This model enables us to examine carefully each part of the process. We will see what contingencies and variations can occur in each segment, and what effects these have on the outcomes. There are many different kinds of collective consciousness or intersubjectivity: different kinds of group membership, of symbolism, and of emotional tones of social experience. I will put forth a theory of how variations in interaction rituals generate the myriad varieties of human social life.

At a number of points, it is possible to bolster the theoretical model by empirical evidence from contemporary microsociology, notably studies of verbal conversation and studies in the sociology of emotions. As an illustration of what we can get from theoretical analysis of live video recordings of natural human interaction, I will present an analysis of a documentary film of firefighters and street crowds in the September 11, 2001 attack on New York City. This raw data brings out vividly how some IR conditions lead to merely momentary, others to long-term, effects.

RITUAL INGREDIENTS, PROCESSES, AND OUTCOMES

Figure 2.1 depicts interaction ritual as a set of processes with causal connections and feedback loops among them. Everything in the model is a variable.

Interaction ritual (IR) has four main ingredients or initiating conditions:

RITUAL INGREDIENTS   **RITUAL OUTCOMES**

common
action or
event
(including
stereotyped
formalities)

group assembly
(bodily co-presence)

barrier to outsiders

mutual focus of
attention

shared mood

transient
emotional
stimulus

*feedback intensification
through rhythmic
entrainment*

*collective
effervescence*

group solidarity

emotional energy in
individual

symbols of social
relationship
(sacred objects)

standards of morality
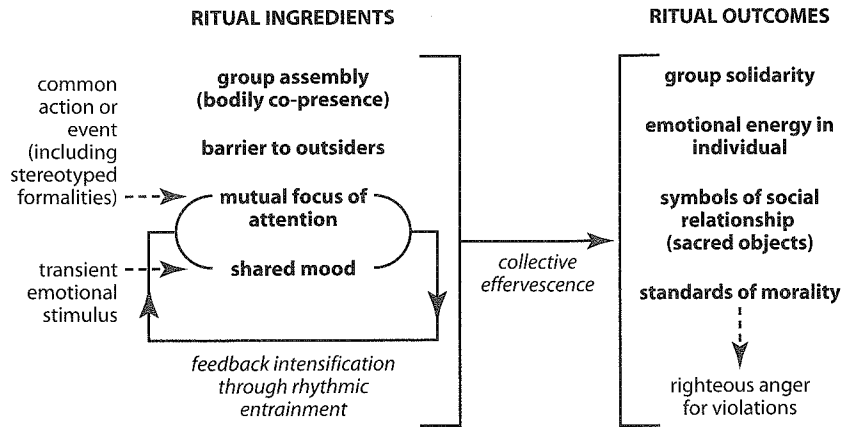
righteous anger
for violations

Figure 2.1 Interaction ritual.

1. Two or more people are physically assembled in the same place, so that they affect each other by their bodily presence, whether it is in the foreground of their conscious attention or not.

2. There are boundaries to outsiders so that participants have a sense of who is taking part and who is excluded.

3. People focus their attention upon a common object or activity, and by communicating this focus to each other become mutually aware of each other's focus of attention.

4. They share a common mood or emotional experience.

These ingredients feed back upon each other. Most importantly, number 3, the mutual focus of attention, and number 4, the common mood, reinforce each other. As the persons become more tightly focused on their common activity, more aware of what each other is doing and feeling, and more aware of each other's awareness, they experience their shared emotion more intensely, as it comes to dominate their awareness. Members of a cheering crowd become more enthusiastic, just as participants at a religious service become more respectful and solemn, or at a funeral become more sorrowful, than before they began. It is the same on the small-scale level of a conversation; as the interaction becomes more engrossing, participants get caught up in the rhythm and mood of the talk. We shall examine the micro-empirical evidence on this later. The key process is participants' mutual entrainment of emotion and attention, producing a shared emotional / cognitive experience. What Durkheim called collective consciousness is this micro-situational production of moments of intersubjectivity.

There are four main outcomes of interaction rituals. To the extent that the ingredients successfully combine and build up to high levels of mutually focused and emotionally shared attention, participants have the experience of

1. group solidarity, a feeling of membership;

2. emotional energy [EE] in the individual: a feeling of confidence, elation, strength, enthusiasm, and initiative in taking action;

3. symbols that represent the group: emblems or other representations (visual icons, words, gestures) that members feel are associated with themselves collectively; these are Durkheim's "sacred objects." Persons pumped up with feelings of group solidarity treat symbols with great respect and defend them against the disrespect of outsiders, and even more, of renegade insiders.

4. feelings of morality: the sense of rightness in adhering to the group, respecting its symbols, and defending both against transgressors. Along with this goes the sense of moral evil or impropriety in violating the group's solidarity and its symbolic representations.

These are the basic elements of the theory.[1] In the following sections I will examine the evidence on how each of these operates.

Formal Rituals and Natural Rituals

At first glance, what seems to be missing in this list are just those items that make up the usual definition of "ritual." In common parlance, a ritual is a formal ceremony, the going through of a set of stereotyped actions: reciting verbal formulas, singing, making traditional gestures, wearing traditional costumes. As we have seen from Durkheim's analysis of religious ritual, the formality and the stereotyped activity are not the crucial ingredients; they only contribute to the core process of intersubjectivity and shared emotion, which is to say to the experience of collective consciousness and collective effervescence, insofar as they contribute to a mutual focus of attention. This is indicated on the far left side of figure 2.1, where a dashed arrow flows from "common action or event (including stereotyped formalities)" to "mutual focus of attention." Stereotyped formulas can generate a socially successful ritual, if indeed the participants also experience a shared emotion, and if they go on to heighten their sense of mutual participation by becoming strongly aware of each other's consciousness. Without this, the ritual is merely "formal," an empty going through of the forms, even a dead ceremonialism.

Mutual focus of attention is a crucial ingredient for a ritual to work; but this focus may come about spontaneously and without explicit concern that this is happening. Goffman's examples of the little interaction rituals of everyday sociability are generally of this sort. Whether you call people by their first names or not is usually not a matter of conscious attention, but it is a small-scale ritual nevertheless; and as we shall see, the difference between high-solidarity conversations and low-solidarity conversations happens on the level of rhythmic features that have no formally recognized rules attached to them. Goffman's examples come from the small scale of momentary social encounters, but spontaneously enacted rituals occur also on a larger scale of public groups, as in the examples Durkheim gives of political and military situations parallel to religious rituals. The crowds gathered during the French Revolution were often improvising new rituals. These were highly effective, even at their first moment without the resources of stereotyped activities, because they had a high degree of mutual focus and shared emotion. Out of such situations, as Durkheim was fond of noting, new symbols are created.

We may refer to those interactions as "natural rituals" that build up mutual focus and emotional entrainment without formally stereotyped procedures; and to those that are initiated by a commonly recognized apparatus of ceremonial procedures as "formal rituals." From the point of view of what makes an interaction ritual work, the core ingredients, processes, and outcomes are the same. Both natural ritual and formal rituals can generate symbols and feelings of membership, and both can reach high degrees of intensity. Beyond this commonality, not all symbolic memberships are of the same kind, and the details of how rituals are put together will affect the kind of membership categories that result. As we shall see, rituals initiated by formal procedures have a stronger effect on broadcasting and affirming a rigid sense of group boundaries than do rituals that begin spontaneously by a naturally occurring focus of attention and shared emotion. The latter give a more fluid sense of membership, unless they become crystallized and prolonged in symbols, which thereby tend to make subsequent IRs more formal. (We will examine the evidence for this pattern in chapter 7, "Situational Stratification.")

Failed Rituals, Empty Rituals, Forced Rituals

Not all rituals are successful. Some fail dismally, even painfully; some mercifully fade away. Some are rebelled against as empty formalities, undergone under duress, gleefully discarded when possible. These variations are useful for refining our theory, and for testing the condi-

tions that make rituals operate. Unsuccessful rituals are important substantively as well, for if every social encounter of everyday life from the most minor up to the major public gatherings is to be put in the scale and weighed against the standard of ritual intensity, we would not expect ritual intensity to be the same everywhere. Since I am going to argue that life is structured around the contrast between successful, socially magnetic ritual situations with their high degree of emotion, motivation, and symbolic charge, and situations of lesser ritualism, it is necessary to sharpen our eyes as to what makes the difference between rituals that are strong and those that are weak. Individuals are attracted to the most intense ritual charges they can get, indifferent to lesser rituals, and repelled by others; we see best what is doing the attracting if we look at what is causing the indifference and the repulsion.

Failed rituals are easiest to see in the case of formal rituals, since there is a public announcement and widespread understanding that a ritual is being attempted. Then we shall cast a glance at natural rituals that fail: political or other gatherings that don't click, demonstrations that don't come off; and at the little Goffmanian rituals of everyday life that don't work.

What is to be our criterion of ritual success or failure? In the case of formal rituals, we have terms that participants will use: "an empty ritual," "merely ceremonial," "fell flat." Figure 2.1 allows us to state a broader criterion that will work for natural as well as formal rituals: most immediately, there is a low level of collective effervescence, the lack of momentary buzz, no shared entrainment at all or disappointingly little. There are further signs of failure on the output side: little or no feeling of group solidarity; no sense of one's identity as affirmed or changed; no respect for the group's symbols; no heightened emotional energy—either a flat feeling unaffected by the ritual, or worse yet, a sense of a drag, the feeling of boredom and constraint, even depression, interaction fatigue, a desire to escape. These imply a continuum of just how badly rituals fail, from mildly missing the mark down through strong ritual abhorrence. These strongly negative states are as important as the highly positive ones. Think of historical events—such as the smashing of icons in the Reformation—as well as moments in personal chains of life experiences—such as a rebellion against a kind of formality that one wishes never to go through again.[2]

In this respect, natural rituals fail for much the same reasons that formal rituals can be empty: the political crowd that mills around aimlessly, its members' attention distracted to things happening outside the person making the speech or away from the enemy symbol to be confronted—individuals and little subgroups drifting away until those

who are left are caught up in a deflationary emotion like rats leaving a sinking ship; the party that remains mired in little knots of perfunctory conversations and never builds up a collective effervescence. Here the missing ingredients are both a lack of shared attention—since duos are too fragmented from the larger group—and lack of a shared initial emotion that can be built up and transformed into a sense of collective participation. Low-intensity, perfunctory, or halting conversations exist in abundance, and in obvious contrast to those conversations that are engrossing. Although our normal form of attribution is to regard the conversations as indicators of the personalities one is encountering, these are situational outcomes that can be explained, as we shall later see in more detail, by the differing matchups of stocks of significant symbols to talk about, and by the level of synergy among the emotional energies of the parties to the conversational situation.

A nice contrast of successful and unsuccessful interaction rituals may be seen in the variety of New Year celebrations: some have a peak moment of genuine enthusiasm at the stroke of midnight (in this respect these celebrations are a mixture of traditional forms and natural, unscripted interactions)—while others consist in flat and prefunctory greetings for the new year. What makes the difference? My observation is that New Year celebrations that work are ones in which, in the hour or two before midnight, people in an assembled crowd start making noise—with the usual whistles, rattles, perhaps firecrackers—but above all making noises at each other, in their direction, better yet, in their face. This leads to entrainment; people start making noises and throwing streamers at each other, often breaking down barriers of acquaintanceship by drawing strangers into interaction. Notice that this interaction has no cognitive content; it is very much like small children running around and making noises at each other. In the context of the New Year celebration, this intruding noisily into someone else's personal space, sometimes even bodily in the mild and playful form of throwing streamers or confetti at them, is taken as friendly and not hostile or deviant. This mutual entrainment in noise-making builds up to a crescendo of noise as everyone is focused on counting down the seconds to midnight; when the anticipated focal point is reached, there is a burst of solidarity gestures, people hugging and kissing each other, even strangers. Compare the more staid New Year party: Individuals continue in normal conversations, saying intelligible things. This keeps them in distinctive little pockets of shared mentality, cutting them off from a larger intersubjectivity that might encompass the whole group. Interactions have not been reduced to the lowest common denominator, as in the mutual noise-making ties; shared emotion does not build up; and the climax of the stroke of midnight is given only perfunctory acknowledgment, immediately after which many participants say they

are tired and want to go home. Successful rituals are exhilarating; failed rituals are energy draining.

An additional type may be called forced rituals. These occur when individuals are forced to put on a show of participating wholeheartedly in interaction rituals. Forced rituals appear to be especially draining when persons are impelled by their own motivation, rather than by external social pressure, to throw themselves enthusiastically into interaction rituals, taking the lead in attempting to make the rituals succeed. Such forced rituals may even succeed, in the sense that other people do become entrained into showing greater level of animated involvement. But they feel forced insofar as the level of collective effervescence is higher than it would be normally given the existing ingredients of shared attention and emotional stimulus; the mutual entrainment has an element of deliberation and self-consciousness rather than a natural flow. It can take considerable effort to be the convivial host or gracious hostess, the life of the party, the spark plug of the political rally. The energy-draining effects of forced rituals are widely known from the aftermath of job interviews, especially in the round of sociable visits accompanying academic job talks, where they are referred to colloquially as "interaction fatigue." Where the individual's social position is such that they feel motivated to take the lead in a continuous round of interactional conviviality, the cumulative affects of energy drain can be considerable.[3]

Forced rituals are energy draining, not EE creating, and the experience of going through many forced rituals will tend to make individuals averse to those kinds of ritual situations, even creating what appear to be anti-sociable personalities. But forced rituals differ from successful IRs precisely by having an unnatural, overly self-conscious, mutual focus and emotional entrainment. Thus, instead of participants becoming naturally charged up by emotional entrainment, they have to put energy into giving the impression that they are charged up. Even those same individuals who are turned off by forced rituals, I suggest, generally undergo some other kinds of ritual interaction that do succeed and that produce positive emotional energy. The difference between forced rituals (along with other kinds of failed rituals) and successful rituals is what steers individuals' IR chains away from the former and toward the latter.

Is Bodily Presence Necessary?

Ritual is essentially a bodily process. Human bodies moving into the same place starts off the ritual process. There is a buzz, an excitement, or at least a wariness when human bodies are near each other. Goffman (1981, 103) noted that even "when nothing eventful is occurring, per-

sons in each other's presence are still nonetheless tracking one another and acting so as to make themselves trackable." From the point of view of evolutionary theory, humans as animals have evolved with nervous systems that pay attention to each other: there is always the possibility of fighting, or spreading an alarm; or, on the positive side, possible sexual contact and more generally sociable gestures.[4] On the whole, the latter kind of evolved orientation toward positive interactions appears more central, since it helps explain why human bodies are so sensitive to each other, and so readily caught up in the shared attention and emotional entrainment that generates interaction rituals.

Yet isn't it possible to carry out a ritual without bodily presence? In modern times we have long-distance communications: by telephone, by video representations such as television, by computer screen. Is it not possible to generate mutual focus and emotional entraiment through these media of communication? In principle, these are empirical matters that can be studied experimentally: we could compare the amount of shared attention and emotion generated by these various interactional media, and their outcomes in level of solidarity, respect for symbolism, and individual EE. In lieu of systematic evidence, I suggest the following patterns.

First, can formal rituals, such as a wedding ceremony or a funeral be conducted over the telephone? The very idea seems inappropriate, and it is unclear that this has been attempted except in the rarest instances. What would be missing? The lack of feedback, of seeing the others present and being seen by them, would surely diminish the sense that one is paying one's respects. Without bodily presence, it is hard to convey participation in the group and to confirm one's identity as member of the group. Especially lacking would be the micro-details of the experience. A funeral is less meaningful without immediate visual cues from the other participants: the uncomfortable body postures, seeing faces tearing up, all the contagious emotional behaviors that pull one one deeply into the mood and start the watering in one's own eyes. In some kinds of ritual occasions—mainly commemorative celebrations congratulating an individual—persons will phone in their greetings, which may even be broadcast to the assembled crowd. But this is a relatively small segment of interaction, and such an action should be expected to bring only a partial feeling of participating: it would seem highly inappropriate at a funeral or a wedding, where the assembly's role is to stand by and witness, or to engage in collective responses. As an experiment, one might rig up the ritual equivalent of a conference call, in which every participant has their apparatus for communicating with everyone else at a distance. My hypothesis is that a conference call ritual would feel quite unsatisfactory to everyone, be-

cause the deliberate vocal messages are only a small part of what generates the feelings of participation. Presumably the effect would be stronger if most the participants, although wired-up, were actually together carrying out the ritual, while the distant participant was wired to all the others and could eavesdrop on at least the sounds they make as they orient to each other—a stronger effect, but one that still does not provide the full sense of emotional participation.

Is the visual mode better? It is possible to watch a funeral or a wedding on television, usually that of a famous public figure. During the fall of 2001, for example, there were sometimes moving TV memorials for 9/11 victims. These long-distance rituals can give a sense of shared emotion, solidarity, and respect for symbolism. Examing this more carefully: what details give these effects? The main effect appears to come from camera close-ups of the faces of members of the crowd, rather than of the ceremonial formality itself. Television here approximates bodily feedback, in effect allowing members of the remote audience to see others like themselves, picked out in the moments when they are displaying the most emotion and the most engrossment in the ceremony. Conversely, we would expect that where the TV cameras focus on disaffected members of the audience, who are looking bored or away from the scene, the remote audience would feel greater distance, witnessing a failed ceremony.

Television is a combination of picture and sound, and these need to be teased apart. The reader may easily perform the experiment. Turn off the sound of the TV while watching a ritualistic event, such as an athletic contest. Alternatively, move away from sight of the screen, leaving the sound on. Palpably, the stronger sense of involvement, of being pulled into the action, is from the sound. A burst of cheering from the crowd, the mood of anticipation of upcoming celebration, will pull the absent viewer back to the screen. Compare the situation where one is watching the picture without the sound: if the action seems to heat up—the team is making its drive, the clock is running down, the baseball team has men on base—there is an irresistable tendency to turn the sound back on. What is missing is not primarily the verbal explanation of the meaning of what is happening, the voices of the announcers, since the experience of watching verbal captions on the screen is not a substitute for the sound; above all, one seeks the sound of the crowd, to share fully in the sense of excitement. This is essentially what the lure of the game-spectacle is all about: the pleasure of those moments of having one's own emotions raised by a noisy crowd expressing the same thing.

Two further observations confirm the preference for bodily participation within an assembled group. After a particularly exciting or up-

Figure 2.2 Celebrating victory by ritualized full-body contact. U.S. and Russian troops converge in Germany (April 1945).

lifting moment of vicarious participation, one wants to seek out someone else to tell about it. Thus, if one had been alone watching a game, a political election, or other engrossing public event, one wants to find someone else to share one's excitement with. If the excitement is strong enough, it isn't sufficient merely to tell the news, even in a loud, enthusiastic, repetitive voice. At peak moments of victory, or suspense followed by dramatic success, the excited viewer reaches out to touch, hug, or kiss someone. IR theory suggests testable details: the IR payoff should be highest in talking excitedly with someone who is also excited by the event; whereas viewers' own enthusiasm for their experienced drama ebbs away proportionately if the person they try to convey it to is less enthusiastic, passive, or remains uninvolved.

The same pattern is visible in sports celebrations and in other victory celebrations, as depicted in the famous photos of kissing and hugging on the street at the announcement of victory in World War II. Sports victory celebrations are events of predictable intensity, since there is a regular schedule leading up to championship games. At peak moments, built up emotionally in proportion to the amount of tension through the series of previous contests, there takes place an informal ritual in which the players touch each other repeatedly while repeating

Figure 2.3 Marking the end of World War II (August 14, 1945).

a few simple words or cries of victory. The bigger the victory and the more the suspense, the more body contact, and the more prolonged contact: the range goes from slapping hands, to body hugs, to piling onto a heap of bodies at the playing field.[5] This is a stratified ritual, since the fans would also like to participate not only with their voices but by getting bodily as near to the players as possible. They are usually prevented from approaching them, thus leaving the high degree of bodily contact as a solidarity ritual reserved for the elite in the center of the ceremony; the fans can only watch, vocally participate, and engage in some bodily contact with each other.

Another observation supporting the preference for bodily present rituals is that attendance at sports events and other mass audience occasions has not declined with the availability of television. This is so even though, for many sports, television provides a better view of the action and the details of the athletes' performance. But people nevertheless prefer to go to the game, especially if it is a "big game"—that

Figure 2.4 A ritual victory pile-on: high school hockey championship (2002).

is, a game in which the consequences are considered important and hence one can confidently expect to be part of an excited crowd. Watching on television is a second best if one cannot get tickets; and in that case, the preferred spectator experience—again, related to how much emotional intensity the game is expected to generate among its spectators—is to assemble a group of fans, a mini-crowd that provides its own resonance for building up shared excitement. Even for games that are routine—without important implications in the league standings, or other such significance—a large part of the pleasures of attending consists in just the moments when the crowd collectively builds up a sense of anticipation and its shared enthusiasm over the flow of events.

Games are rituals, contrived to produce situations of dramatic tension and victory; the rules of scoring and moving into position to score have been tinkered with over the years in order to make it "a better game"—which is to say, to provide moments of collective emotion. It is perfectly in keeping with such developments that sports emblems become sacred objects, venerated and treated with respect. Sports celebrities are themselves sacred objects, in just the same manner that Durkheim (1912/1965, 243–44) describes a political leader becoming an emblem for the crowd of which he is a center of attention (see chap-

ter 1). The overt intent of the game—to win victories by following certain rules of competition, or to display athletic skill—is merely the surface content. What motivates people to witness games is primarily the experience of being at a highly successful ritual: successful because it has been contrived so that the ritual ingredients will all be present to a very high degree, especially the occurrence of strong emotion in a setting where it can be amplified by bodily interaction within the crowd focusing attention on the action of the game. The leisure time of modern societies—since the mid-nineteenth century when a sufficiently large group of spectators became available, free from the constraints of household and work—has become dominated by this species of deliberately invented ritual, designed to provide moments of ritual solidarity that previously would have been provided by religion, warfare, or political ceremony.

Sports events do not have the same recognized status as other formal rituals, but are generally regarded as a form of play, of the non-serious part of the world. Nevertheless, they are eminently successful in providing high points of ritual experience, and for many people they are preferred to participating in religious rituals (as evident when games compete with church services on Sundays). Games are natural rituals insofar as they unconsciously or nondeliberately bring about the ingredients for a successful ritual. But they are scheduled, predictable, and contrived (using a ritual technology to generate what might be considered an artificial ritual experience), and they bring together a community that has no other coherence, and no other purpose, than the experience of the peaks of ritual emotion itself.

The mechanism operates in the case of other forms of entertainment. Attending a concert has little advantage over listening to recordings as far as hearing the music is concerned; generally one hears it best on recordings. It is the experience of belonging to a focused crowd that provides the lure of a popular entertainment group; all the more so if the entertainers already have the status of being a sacred object, giving fans the additional excitement of being close to them—even if it is hundreds of feet away in a big arena. The main experience of the pop concert is the mood of the other fans; this is a textbook case of mutual buildup of emotion through bodily feedback in all its modalities. The same applies to a classical music performance, although the mood is more sedate, in keeping with the difference in social-class tone and atmosphere. Here, too, it is the experience of being at a special event—the hush of attention before the orchestra starts, the collective focus on the musicians—that makes the experience at the opera or the symphony a more significant experience than listening to the same music privately at home. This is not simply a matter of being seen by other

people at a high-culture event—since under contemporary conditions these crowds are typically anonymous, in contrast to the more enclosed high-status communities in previous centuries who recognized each other at the opera—but comes from the subjective feelings of the ritual experience. The hypothesis is that participants have a stronger identification as persons attached to high culture if the crowd has been enthusiastic in response to the performance, than when the collective response is weaker; and that the effect of ritual intensity is stronger than the effect of being recognized by other people.

Televised and radio-broadcast concerts have such effects only weakly. The same holds for political and religious gatherings. Politicians' campaign speeches, nominating conventions, and important official addresses are televised and can be experienced at a distance. Nevertheless, persons who are strong partisans want to be physically present, confirming a reciprocal relation between identity and physical presence. The hypothesis is that attending political events in person increases partisanship, to the extent that the speech is a "good one"— in other words, that it involves the interplay of speaker and crowd that builds up shared enthusiasm; and reciprocally, those persons who already have an identification with the political leader or faction have a stronger desire to take part. The running off of these repetitive relationships is a self-reinforcing IR chain.

Religious ceremonial, too, can be broadcast by radio and television, and ministers (primarily in the United States) have made their reputation as media evangelists (Hadden and Swann 1981). Nevertheless, broadcast religious services do not displace personal attendance, but reinforce and enhance it. The successful media evangelist broadcasts not just the preaching or the events at the altar, but a large crowd at the worship service: the cameras make an effort to portray the congregation into which the remote viewers and listeners can project themselves. Broadcast evangelists become media stars; this further enhances their draw as sacred objects that audiences want to be close to. There is a rush to attend the service in person, indeed precisely when it is being broadcast, as if this amplifies the halo of being in the center of religious action. The draw of close personal contact—as close as big crowds allow—operates for traditional as well as evangelical churches; tours of the pope draw enormous crowds.

Religious services, like other collective experience of ritual, vary in their intensity. Distance media can provide some of the sense of shared attention and emotion, which give a feeling of attraction, membership, and respect. The strongest effects are reserved, however, for full bodily assembly. Conversion experiences—coming forward to be born again, or otherwise committing oneself to a life of religious dedication—hap-
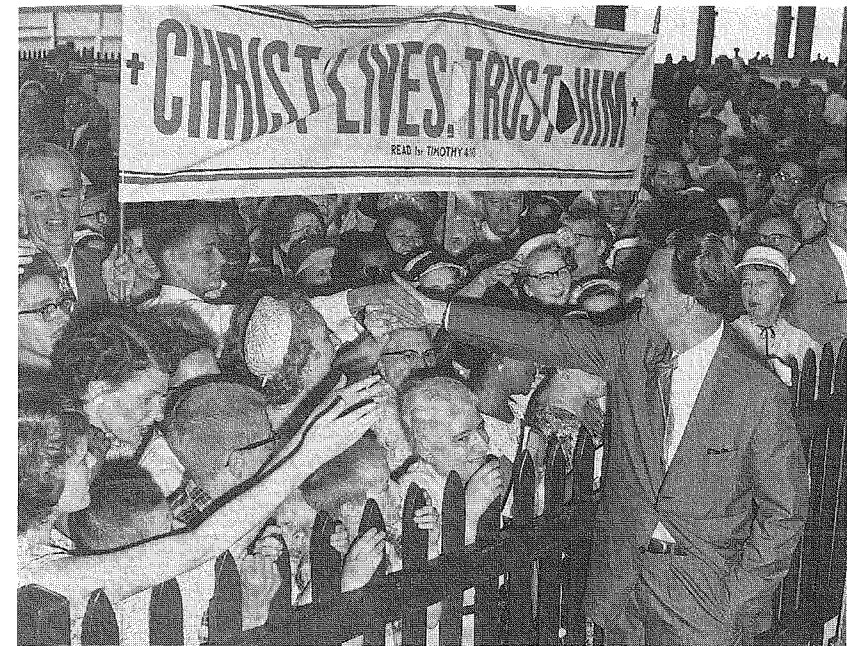
Figure 2.5 The preacher as a sacred object: Billy Graham and admirers (1962).

pen primarily at big evangelical meetings (Johnson 1971). Personal presence in a crowd, worked up collectively to a strong shared emotions, gives the impetus for reshaping one's identity. The downside of religious conversion confirms the pattern as well. A considerable proportion of persons who are born again drop out of religious participation within a year; many persons are born again numerous times (Bromley 1988; Richardson 1978). It is the big, intense religious gatherings that bring forth the emotion and the shift in membership attachment; as one settles back into the routine of smaller and less collectively emotional church services, and then drifts away from attending, the identification and the emotional energy also fade.

I have drawn these comparisons from large-scale, for the most part formal ceremonial gatherings, and conclude that remote communications give some sense of ritual participation—if at a lower level of intensity—especially through hearing the voices of the audience and through visuals that focus on audience members like the viewers themselves. Does this hold for small-scale natural rituals such as sociable gatherings? In principle, one could hold a party via a conference call, but I have never heard of anyone doing it. At most, I have suggested, a missing guest might phone in to a celebration that is taking

place, to address those who are bodily present; but this confirms the sense that the one on the phone is the one who is missing, and indeed the content of the message generally mentions that voice contact is a poor substitute for being there in person. The same is true of appearing by remote visual, such as sending a video tape. When video conferencing becomes widely available, there will be opportunity to test the intensity that can be reached in social rituals carried out by a combination of remote voice and picture. My prediction is that parties and visits will not go away; that remote hookups however vivid will always be considered weak substitutes for the solidarity of actual bodily presence (Turner 2002 reaches similar conclusions). People will go on meeting for a drink or for coffee when they have something important to discuss, or want to establish or express a personal tie. One difference between remote communication and bodily presence is that the former does not usually involve taking refreshments; although there is no reason why persons could not have a drink vicariously, telling each other over the phone what they are drinking, even toasting each other. But this is almost never done; it seems a violation of the spirit of the drinking ritual not to be drinking together, touching glasses, raising them to one's mouth together.[6] The physical substance ingested—the alcohol, coffee, tea, soft drinks, the party cake, the shared dinner, or, in older times, a shared smoke—of course have some sensory character of their own. But they are not solitary pleasures, of the kind they would be if several persons tried to carry out a dinner party by telephone, with each eating their own meal while talking on the line. The ingestion of food and drink is part of the bodily coparticipation; these are ritual substances when they are consumed together in the atmosphere of a sociable occasion.[7] If, we should admit, some degree of intersubjectivity and shared mood can take place by phone, and perhaps by remote video (although the effect would be diminished by lack of reciprocal communication), this nevertheless seems pale compared to face-to-face, embodied encounters.

On the whole, it appears that large-scale, relatively formal rituals come off better by remote communication than do small-scale natural rituals. This seems to be so because large-scale rituals are working with established symbols, already build up through previous iteration of an IR chain. Relatively impersonal rituals convey membership in large groups, only part of which ever assembles in one place; and thus distance communication gives a sense of something large that one belongs to. But this is effective only if there is at least intermittent personal contact with some other members, worshipers of the same symbols. And the remote broadcast must convey the audience's participation, not merely its leaders or performers.

How then do we assess recent forms of communication, including email and the Internet? For the most part, these lack the flow of interaction in real time; even if electronic communications happen within minutes, this is not the rhythm of immediate vocal participation, which as we shall see, is honed to tenths of seconds. There is little or no buildup of focus of attention in reading an email, no paralinguistic background signals of mutual engrossment. A written message may attempt to describe an emotion, or to cause one; but it seems rare that email is used for this purpose. A hypothesis is that the closer the flow of emails is to real conversational exchange, the more possibility of a sense of collective entrainment, as in a rapid exchange of emails in a period of minutes or seconds. But even here it is dubious that strong feelings of solidarity can be built up, or the charging up of a symbol with collective significance.

My main hypothesis is to the contrary: the tendency to drop ceremonious forms in email—greetings, addressing the target by name, departing salutations—implies a lowering of solidarity. Email settles into bare utilitarian communication, degrading relations, precisely because it drops the ritual aspects.

The electronic revolution under way since the mass computerization of the 1980s and 1990s will no doubt bring further elaborations of distance communications. Nevertheless, the hypothesis of IR theory is that face-to-face communications will not disappear in the future; nor will people have any great desire to substitute electronic communication for bodily presence. People will still prefer to assemble for little social gatherings with intimates, for parties with friends; entertainment and sports events will still be considered most satisfying through attendance at live performance; political gatherings will generate more enthusiasm than their remote images. Occasions with a strong sense of sacredness will be those where people want to be there in the flesh in the presence of the spirit; weddings, funerals, high religious experiences will be attended in person or, if not, will be felt second rate.

Similarly for the inculcation of culture. Teaching by remote television hookup, already used for mass education, will be felt to be an inferior form to student-teacher contact in the same room, even if this is confined to the mutual flash of recognizing attention or inattention, and the adjusting of mood by speaker and audience.[8] For the same reason, electronic shopping, despite its convenience, is unlikely to make shops and shopping malls disappear. The experience of being in the store itself is an action on a stage, enhanced amidst the buzz of other people (Ritzer 1999; Miller 1998). Shopping in well-appointed settings is a combination of show, museum, and crowd experience, part of the "bright lights" and the action of urban experience. Buying

something may be regarded as paying the price of admission to the experience, as much as or more than paying for the utilarian value of the object purchased. For some people, and on some occasions, shopping is a utilitarian act; but the component of social ritual is a considerable part of its allure.

Not to say there may not be a great increase in the use of distance media, and that sheer economic and practical pressures may not squeeze out face contacts as inherently more troublesome and expensive. IR theory has a prediction here too: the more that human social activities are carried out by distance media, at low levels of IR intensity, the less solidarity people will feel; the less respect they will have for shared symbholic objects; and the less enthusiastic personal motivation they will have in the form of EE.

There is a special proviso. It is possible that electronic media of the future might be designed just so that they can target those aspects of human physiology that make IRs work. IRs build up high levels of focused attention and emotional entrainment; conceivably communications devices of the future could attempt to send, from nervous system to nervous system, just those signals that most enhance these shared experiences. There might well be something dangerous in such devices. For if high levels of IR intensity are the peak experience of human lives, electronic devices that send such signals would be tremendously appealing, especially if they could artificially raise such experiences to a high level on demand. IR-producing equipment might well create an extreme form of addiction. In another variant, if the devices could be manipulated by an external agent rather than by the receiver, they would be enormously powerful devices of social control. These possibilities, although perhaps still remote, are worth considering as implications of a mature IR theory. The advance of microsociology suggests dangers ahead; against these, theoretical understanding provides our best forewarning.

The main point of these comparisons is to show what bodily presence does for the intensity of IRs. Bodily presence makes it easier for human beings to monitor each other's signals and bodily expressions; to get into shared rhythm, caught up in each other's motions and emotions; and to signal and confirm a common focus of attention and thus a state of intersubjectivity. The key is that human nervous systems become mutually attuned; the comparison of various distance media shows the importance of the vocal modality, and that visual focus operates above all through monitoring other audience participants. If nervous systems could become directly entrained at long distance, the effects would be the same as bodily presence.

THE MICRO-PROCESS OF COLLECTIVE ENTRAINMENT IN NATURAL RITUALS

The IR model is not just a theoretical construct; it describes, with greater or lesser precision, what observably goes on in social encounters. Durkheim was, of course, laying out the initial concepts, and Goffman never stated very systematically just what were the processes of everyday interaction ritual, much less examined the causes and effects of their variations. I have attempted to do this, guided in part by the implicit logic of Durkheim's analysis, while suggesting refinements according to what subsequent micro-interactional research has turned up. Some of the most useful evidence has been gathered by microsociological researchers following the ethnomethodological program, by sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists, and by psychologists. These research schools have their own theoretical agendas, and thus for my purposes it has been necessary to take their findings out of the theoretical context in which they were presented, and reinterpret them in the light of how they fit or modify (or possibly reject) IR theory. On the whole, the fit has been encouraging. Now there is also microsociological research carried out by Scheff and coworkers with an explicitly Durkheimian orientation; and micro-situational work in the sociology of emotions. I will argue for the coherence of many lines of work with a refined model of mutual focus and emotional entrainment.

A good micro-conversational example of the buildup of collective effervescence in natural rituals is shared laughter. The sounds of laughter are bodily produced by a rhythmic repetition of breaths caught and forcefully expelled; at the height of hilarity, this happens involuntarily. Most laughter (and its strongest intensity and pleasure) is collectively produced. Once laughter begins, it can feed upon itself.

Here is an example where one young woman is telling her sister about swimming in the nude (Jefferson 1973):

```
Olive:  . . . . there's two places where the hot wahder comes in'nyih g'n get
               right up close to'm en ih yuz feels like yer [takin a douche]
Edna:                                                    [huh huh huh] ahh
        hah hah=
Olive:  =[HUHH HUHH HUHHH HA HA uhh ha-uhh ha: : ha: :] huh
Edna:   ...[hhh HUH HUH HAHH HA HA HA HA HUH HHHHEH!]
```

The brackets [indicate where both persons are vocalizing at the same time. Here Edna starts to giggle as Olive builds up to her punch line; the underlining of *douche* indicates vocal stress, but looking at this closely we see that Edna already anticipates something is coming. The equal sign = indicates precise turn-taking, with no gap between the

utterances; Olive starts laughing just as Edna very briefly pauses in giggling. Now Olive has raised the volume (indicated by capitalization), and Edna, after a brief pause and one more light giggle, follows her. A few moments later Olive starts to quiet down and gradually decelerate (the colons : indicate that the syllable is drawn out); Edna is still laughing very hard in the normal gasping rhythm, but when Olive has decelerated almost all the way down, Edna brings her laugh to a halt abruptly.

Laughter may start with a humorous remark or incident, but can be prolonged thereafter by further remarks or gestures, which in themselves are not funny, but in the context of the rhythm contribute to further outbursts of collective breath expulsion.[9] One further example (from Jefferson 1985):

Joe: Yih'n heah comes the inspecta.
Carol: eh-huh-huh-huh-[huh HA HA HA HA] HA *HA HA HA*
          [ha ha ah!
Mike: [U h - I t ' s B i g D a d d y]
James: [*Oh* : : let's seh let's seh . . . .

Mike's remark "It's Big Daddy" comes in just on the beat when Carol is stepping up from giggling to loud laughter, and it has the effect of making her emphasize even more strongly the next series of *HA HA HA*. She quiets down when James intrudes a different kind of speech act (suggesting what they should do now), whereupon Carol abruptly forces her laugh to an end (the exclamation mark).

Laughter illustrates both the collective and rhythmically entraining aspect of micro-interactional ritual.[10] It also points up a central reason why people are attracted to high-intensity interaction rituals: perhaps the strongest human pleasures come from being fully and bodily absorbed in deeply synchronized social interaction (McClelland 1985). This is why shared laughter—otherwise merely an uncontrollable interruption of breathing patterns—is so pleasurable. It exemplifies the more general pattern of collective effervescence, and explains why people are attracted to high-intensity interaction rituals, and why they generate feelings of solidarity. The symbols that represent these interactions hold deep connotations of pleasure for group members, and this helps make them sacred objects to defend, as well as reminders of group interactions that members would like to reestablish in future encounters.

Conversational Turn-Taking as Rhythmic Entrainment

Collective effervescence in natural rituals is not confined to momentary bursts like laughter. There is a longer process of building up a

heightened mood, which can be seen through the methods of analyzing micro-details of conversation pioneered by ethnomethodologists. As we shall see, entrainment occurs especially through falling into shared rhythms—in fact shared rhythms at different periodicities in time, from the level of the speaker's turn, down to the level of fine-grained resonances that make up the paralinguistic pitch of the vocal tones.[11]

Ethnomethodology began as a theoretical program of radical micro-reductionism, emphasizing the local—which is to say, situational—production of the sense of social structure. Ethnomethodology fostered ultra-micro-empiricism, investigating social interaction in hitherto unparalleled detail, especially by using the new portable recording devices that were just then becoming available in the 1960s and 1970s. The theoretical orientation for this research was to ferret out ethnomethods: that is, the devices by which actors sustain a sense of social structure, the tacit methods of commonsense reasoning. Thus ethnomethodology cuts at a rather different angle than the Durkheimian IR theory: the former is concerned with cognition and structure (even if structure is taken in some sense as an illusion, a mere collective belief), the latter with emotion and solidarity.[12] Nevertheless, it is easy to demonstrate that the most important research findings of ethnomethodologically inspired researchers display the central mechanisms of the rhythmic entrainment model.

The most common type of everyday interaction is the ordinary conversation. This has been studied since the 1970s with great precision by conversation analysts using tape-recordings. Here we find a very high degree of social coordination, indeed at the level of tenths of seconds. Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) specified a set of turn-taking "rules" by which conversation appears to be governed. These may be recast as a Durkheimian process once we note that the "rules" are not always followed, but that interactions break down in particular ways when particular patterns are violated.[13]

The key turn-taking rules are as follows: one person speaks at a time; when the turn is finished, another person speaks. The full force of this is not apparent until we see the minute coordination of tempos with which this is carried out. In a successful conversation, the gap between one person ending their turn and the next person starting is typically less than 0.1 second; alternatively there are very slight overlaps (ca. 0.1 sec.) between speakers.

As an example, consider the following (from Heritage 1984, 236):

E: = Oh *honey* that was a lovely *l*uncheon I shoulda *ca*:lled you
       s:soo[:ner but *I:*] l:[lo:ved it. It w's just deli:ghtfu[:l.   ]
M: [((f))Oh:::] [(   )   [Well]=

M: = *I* w's gla[d   you)] (came)]
E: ['nd yer f:]*f*riends] 're so da:rl*i*:ng,=
M: = *Oh*:::[: it w'z:]
E: [e-that *P*]*a*:t isn'she a do:[:*ll*?]
M: [iYe]h *isn't* she pretty,
    (.)
E: *Oh*: she's a beautiful girl.=
M: = Yeh *I* think she's a pretty gir[l.
                   [En' that Reinam'n::
    (.)
E: *She* SCA:RES me.=

Two women have just left a luncheon party, chatting enthusiastically. The reader might read the transcript out loud several times to get the rhythm. The underlinings (Oh *ho*ney that was a lovely *lu*ncheon I shoulda *ca*:lled you s:soo:ner) are emphases. The colons (:) mean that the sound is prolonged. Parentheses that are empty ( ) or that contain an unintelligible sound (f) indicate that the speaker's voice is too soft to articulate anything. Parentheses containing a word (came) indicate that the speaker is fading, usually when someone else is speaking at the same time.

Evelyn (E) is in a rhythm, and Marge (M) is like a counterpoint in a singing duet, following along with her. Nothing very important is being said here, but a strong social meaning is conveyed. The rules of turn-taking are being adhered to very closely. The equal sign (=) is used to indicate that as soon as one person stops the other starts. Virtually every new utterance is right on the beat. The parenthesis with a dot in it (.) indicates a gap of 1/10 second or less; these are the only breaks in this conversation, and these are so small that they cannot actually be noticed. In the conventions of conversation analysis, a parenthesis containing a number indicates the amount of silence between utterances. For instance (1.0) means a 1-second gap. These are miniscule bits of time, but they are socially very significant. Humans can perceive what happens in units down to about 0.2 seconds; below that they blur together and are unconscious. That means that a gap of 1.0 seconds is actually about 5 beats of consciousness, bam-bam-bam-bam-bam. If there is a gap in a conversation of 1.0 second, it tends to feel like a deafening silence; and even a smaller gap feels like the smooth flow is broken.[14]

A more sociological way to state the turn-taking rule is: successful talk has no gaps and no overlaps; no embarrassing pauses between speakers or within utterances, and a minimal amount of struggle over who gets the floor to speak at any one moment. What we mean by

successful talk here is that it is socially successful, a conversational ritual generating solidarity among the speakers. The success of conversational turn-taking, like the degree of solidarity in IRs generally, is variable. Some conversations are awkward, lacking in solidarity because they are full of pauses, and other conversations are hostile and mutually at loggerheads because the participants keep interrupting one another and struggle to keep the other from speaking. The point that stands out is that successful conversational ritual is rhythmic: one speaker comes in at the end of the other's turn with split-second timing, coming in right on the beat as if keeping up a line of music.

We may characterize conversations that follow this pattern as high-solidarity conversations: friendly chatting or animated discussions among friends. But solidarity is a variable; not all conversations are of this sort, and in fact this variability is just what we want to explain. Some interactions are more solidary than others, thus producing the differentiated field of social encounters that make up real life. The turn-taking "rules" can be violated in two directions. Two (or more) persons could all speak at the same time. Or turn-taking can fail because one person stops talking and the other person does not pick up immediately. In fact, the gaps need not be very large in order to signal that there is a breakdown in solidarity; what is colloquially known as an "embarrassing pause" is often on the order of 1.5 seconds or less. The baseline of normal solidarity conversation is that turns are coordinated at tempos of tenths of seconds; anything as long as 0.5 second is already missing several beats, and longer periods are experienced subjectively as huge gaps.

For this kind of failure of solidarity, consider the following example (Heritage 1984, 248):

A: Is there something bothering you or not?
        (1.0)
A: Yes or no
        (1.5)
A: Eh?
B: No.

This is obviously a strained relationship. A and B could be a parent and child, or two spouses who are not getting along. What is striking here is that the gaps are, after all, not really very long. But in conversational time, 1.5 seconds seems like an eternity. Even a shorter break is noticed by conversationalists, because it seems like an "embarrassing pause." And embarrassment, as Goffman (1967) noted, is a sign that the social relationship is not working as expected.

The other way solidarity can break down is through a violation of "no gap, no overlap" in the other direction. This is the pattern that we find in angry arguments, when both participants try to talk at the same time, typically speaking louder and faster in an effort to override the other. "Having the floor" is a tacit agreement as to where the focus of attention will be; a conversation is an IR that moves the focus of attention, according to these agreed-upon "rules," from one speaker to another. Ritual solidarity breaks down when no one wants to talk; the focus of attention evaporates into thin air. It also breaks down when the participants want to maintain a focus of attention, but they dispute who is going to be in the focus, and thus whose words are going to be the symbolic object that will receive ritual attention and endorsement.[15]

Consider the following example (Schegloff 1992, 1335):

A:　. . .we have a concern for South Vietnam's territorial integrity which is why we're the:re. But our primary concern regarding *our* personnel, *any* military commander has that primary *loyal*[ty.

B:　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　[No? Are:n' we there because of U.N. uh—doctrine?

A:　[*No:::*

B:　[Aren't we there under the [the (　　　) -

A:　　　　　　　　　　　　[*Where* didju ever get *that* cockeyed idea.

B:　Whaddya *mea:n*.

A:　*U*.N. doctrine.

B:　We're there, representin' the U. *N*. No?

A:　Wouldu- You go ask the U.N., and you'll get laughed out. *No*..

B:　We're there because- of our interests.

A:　[Yes.

B:　[We're not there wavin the U.N. flag?

A:　We're- There's no U.N. flag *there*. Thet's not a United Nations force. The United Nations has never taken a single action on this. ((pause))

A:　[I-

B:　[*No*. I think (this ti::me)- I think you're *wrong*.

A:　*Sorry sir, I'd suggest yuh check yer facts.*

B:　I think y- I uh [(　　)

A:　　　　　　　　[I will refrain from telling you you don't know what cher talking abou[t,

B:　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　[I [wish you *would*.

A:　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　[I just suggest you [talk- you check yer facts.

B:　[I wish you *would*.

B:　Because this's what I read in- in the *news*papers.

　　　　[That we represent-

A:　[Well, then you been reading some *pretty ba:d* newspapers.

B:　[We represent the U.*N*. there.

A:　[F'give me, but I gotta go.

A:　Sir, I would suggest thet if that's the case you switch newspapers.

B: ˙ Well I hope I c'n call you ba:ck an' *correct* you.

A:　L'k *you* check it out. 'n call me.

B:　I'll do [so.

A:　　　　[Okay?

B:　I certainly *will*.

A:　Mm *gu*'night.

As the argument builds up, the speakers interrupt each other, then talk over each other for extended periods. Even as they attempt to close off the discussion at the end and return to normal politeness, they can't refrain from additional digs and overlaps. The pattern of emphases throughout also conveys a series of vocal jabs.

This is not a full-scale treatise on sociolinguistics, so we will have to forego many complexities.[16] But let us note a few objections. "No gap, no overlap" may be culturally variable. That is, the generalization is based on tape-recordings made among native English speakers in the United States and Britain, and may not be valid everywhere. Thus there are tribal societies (according to comments made by participants at symposiums where this conversational model has been presented) where typically there are fairly long gaps between one speaker and another; indeed, speaking too quickly after another is regarded as a violation. This suggests a reformulation, but not necessarily a rejection of the model of conversation as solidarity-producing rhythmic coordination.[17] The key process is to keep up the common rhythm, whatever it may be. Where this is done, the result is solidarity; where it is violated, either by speaking too soon or too hesistantly, the result is felt as aggressive encroachment, or as alienation, respectively.[18]

An advantage in getting beyond the rule-following frame of reference is to see how conversations have to be built up over time; thus they go through crucial passages where the conversation (and hence the social relationship) may or may not come off. Many conversations do not get off the ground; opening gambits are not taken, or do not hook into sufficient response to start building up the rhythmic coordination. Once a conversation takes off, it builds a self-sustaining momentum; as is clear from everyone's experience, this varies tremendously from one combination of interlocutors to another. Indeed, this

is a principal way in which lines of social cleavage are enacted; one can say, as a crude approximation, that members of the same status group are those who are able to sustain highly entraining conversational rituals whereas members of different status groups are those who cannot. This captures part of the ingredients that make or break a conversational IR. But there are also instances in which the flow can go either way, given the same participants.

An example easy for academics to observe is the question period at the end of a lecture or conference presentation. Frequently this begins with a long pause; the subjective experience of members of the audience at that moment is that they can think of nothing to say. Yet if the pause is broken, usually by the highest-status member of the audience asking a question, the following question tends to come after a shorter pause; and by the third or fourth question, multiple hands go up. This shows that the audience was not lacking in symbolic capital, in things to talk about, but in emotional energy, the confidence to think and speak about these ideas; not that they had nothing to say, but that could not think of it until the group attention shifted toward interaction including the audience. Nor is this a matter of the speaker being uninteresting; often an especially successful speaker is the biggest show-stopper. This is best understood as a process of monopolizing the focus of attention; the speaker is elevated into too remote a realm, surrounded by too much of an aura of respect (Durkheimian sacredness) to be approached.[19] Once the approach has been made (high-status members of the audience are best positioned to do so because of their store of EE), and the focus of attention shifted to a back-and-forth exchange, the momentum flows another way, and questions seem to be pulled in as if by magnetism.

This flow of initiative from one speaker to another is the turn-taking process again. The classic conversation analysis model of Sacks et al. expressed this in a simplified way: the last speaker gets to determine the next speaker, either by addressing someone or by taking another turn him / herself. David Gibson (1999, 2001) provides a more refined model, based on examining the sequence of turn-taking in a large number of management meetings in a large corporation. Gibson shows that there are a few typical ways in which turns pass from one speaker to another, while other possible sequences of turns are extremely rare, and may be negatively sanctioned. Most typically, one person speaks, then another answers (in Gibson's representation AB:BA, A speaks to B, then B speaks to A). If this goes on at length, it constitutes a kind of conversational ping-pong game, in which two persons monopolize the conversation and everyone else is reduced to spectators. We can under-

stand the situational force in this when we note that the spectators often chafe in the role but cannot find a way to break in once the pair has the momentum. Other typical patterns are for the speaker to address the whole group (or make an undirected remark into the air). Gibson gives this as AO:XA, indicating that the most typical next turn is for someone in the group to take the floor but direct a comment back to A. Even when there is an interruption (instead of AB:BA, there is AB:XA, where X is someone who wasn't addressed), typically the interrupter breaks into the ongoing conversation, usually speaking to the last speaker (AB:XA) or to the last person addressed (AB:XB), but not to someone completely new. I would say that a group conversation is like passing a ball around, where the ball consists of the focus of attention. This focus entrains everyone present to follow its progress around the room; when someone breaks in, it is done by latching onto someone who either immediately or very recently was in the focus. The metaphor of passing a ball isn't quite right; it is more like the image of a ball on a screen in time-lapse leaving a trail of electronic particles just behind it. Once again we see conversational IR as a flow of entrainment in a focus of attention; this remains so even when there is a struggle over getting into that focus. As Gibson emphasizes (2001), the structural constraints on getting the floor—getting into a temporally limited attention space—are a major determinant on how influence is situationally enacted, even in formal organizations.

A similar process operates in large public gatherings such as political rallies and debates. A rousing political speaker draws interruptions of applause; but the audience starts to build up its applause in the seconds preceding the speaker coming to his / her punch line; viewed on video tape, it looks as if the crowd is making the speaker say the words that they will greet with their peak of coordinated noise (Atkinson 1984; Clayman 1993). Examining the sequence in micro-detail, we see that both speaker and audience are caught up in a rhythm; the speaker's rhetorical utterances have a pattern of stresses and pauses, repetitions, and accretions (this is what gives public speaking a distinctive rhetorical tone), which let the audience know that something is coming, and at what moment they can join in with maximal effect. Similarly on the audience side: recordings of applauding or booing show that the audience builds up its noise in a distinctive rhythm; a few initial voices or handclaps unleash a rapid acceleration of noise as the full audience joins in; whereas abortive applause fails at a certain moment in this temporal sequence if this rapid acceleration has not taken off, tacitly signaling to others that if they join in they will be exposed in an isolated minority instead of joining triumphantly in a shared focus

of attention. For similar reasons, booing is harder to bring to a critical mass of participation, and drops off in a shorter time than applauding. As is generally the case in micro-interaction, solidarity processes are easier to enact than conflict processes. As I will show elsewhere, the implication is that conflict is much easier to organize at a distance, against unseen groups, than in the immediate interactional situation.

In the following example (from Clayman 1993, 113), bbbbbbbb indicates sustained booing; xxxxxx indicates applause; zzzzzz indicates a buzz of uncoordinated audience sounds. Capitals (XXXXX; BBBBBB) indicate loud applause or booing; x-x-x-x-x-x and b-b-b-b-b-b indicate weak noises, and x x x x or b b b b are isolated single hand claps or boos:

DQ: . . .and if qualifications alo::ne (.) .h are going to be: the issue in this
        cam*pa*ign. (1.0) George Bush has more qualifications than Michael
        Dukakis and Lloyd Bentsen com*bi*ned.
        (0.6)
AUD: xxx-xxXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX[XXXXXXXXXX=
AUD: [b-b-b-b
AUD: XXXXX[XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXx[xxxxxxxxxx-x-x-x h x h x x x x (8.5)
AUD: [bbbbbbbbbBBBBBBBBBB[BBBBBBBBBbbb-b-b (2.9)
MOD: [Senator Bentsen-

Here the applause, after a scattered beginning, successfully accelerates, and continues for a typical rhythmic unit for applause consisting of about eight seconds (very strong applause responses go on for another one or even more such eight-second units). Halfway into the applause segment, there is a failed effort to get booing going; a second effort successfully builds up to loud booing toward the end of the applause segment, and even overtakes the applause at just the moment when the moderator attempts to return to the debaters. Even with this momentary triumph, the booing quickly subsides thereafter while the applause fades more slowly. As we see from the numbers in parentheses, the booing lasts for a much shorter time (2.9 vs. 8.5 seconds).

These processes of rhythmic coordination are almost always unconscious. The success or failure of a natural ritual is felt rather than thought, at least initially; although, of course, reflective persons could comment on it, to others or to themselves, thereby putting a verbal interpretation upon it. There is a repertoire of cultural symbols that make up the content of these conversations; and we shall examine later just where the significance of symbols arises and how it is propagated from one IR in the chain to another. Possession of a stock of shared symbols is one of the ingredients that goes into the success (and lack of such possession is a condition for the failure) of an IR to build up

collective effervescence. What we are examining here, in analytical separation, is the micro-mechanism by which situational solidarity occurs; this is what charges up the ongoing social significance of a stock of verbal symbols, or dissipates them into meaninglessness.

Experimental and Micro-Observational Evidence on Rhythmic Coordination and Emotional Entrainment

Besides turn-taking, other aspects of interaction become rhythmically coordinated, some to a very fine degree. Films of conversations show that speakers and listeners both tend to time their bodily movements to the rhythm of the words being spoken (Condon and Ogston 1971; Kendon 1970, 1980; Capella 1981). The body movements are rapid and subtle: nodding the head, blinking eyes, and other gestures. Often they are too rapid to be seen by the normal eye and become visible only when a film shot at 24 frames per second is played back frame by frame. Much of this research has centered on interactions between mothers and babies, the epitome of a high-solidarity situation. Neonates as young as a few weeks or months synchronize vocalizations and movements with those of adults (Condon and Sander 1974a, 1974b; Contole and Over 1981), long before they learn to talk. This suggests that rhythmic synchronization may be the basis of talking—an outgrowth of naturally occurring IRs. Infants in hospital nurseries often engage in contagious crying; they also match the pitch level of voices that they hear (Hatfield et al. 1994, 83). Electroencephalograph (EEG) recordings reveal that synchronization can occur between the rhythmic brain waves of adults who are conversing, as well as between infants and adults (Condon and Sander 1974a, 1974b). When EEG synchronization does not happen, there are typically group boundaries; it is less likely in conversations between black and white adults than among whites.

Besides the timing of gestures and brain waves, conversationalists synchronize various features of their voices: pitch register and range, loudness, tempo, accent, duration of syllables (clipped or drawled sounds) (Gregory 1983; Hatfield et al. 1994, 28). As a conversation goes on, partners tend to adapt their speech patterns and rhythms to one another (Gregory 1983; Jaffe and Feldstein 1970; Warner 1979; Warner et al. 1983). Erickson and Shultz (1982, 72) sum up: "Whereas there is no metronome playing while people talk, their talking itself serves as a metronome." In some conversations, synchronization comes and goes, building up and fading at different moments; but especially among

couples engaged in lengthy conversations, synchrony built up and stayed high (Capella and Planalp 1981; Capella 1981).

Rhythmic synchronization is correlated with solidarity. Psychologists have shown this for several kinds of micro-behavior. On the vocal dimension, where conversations are closely coordinated in rhythm, the speakers like each other better (Hatfield et al. 1994, 29, 41–44). This is also true for bodily movements; among young couples, those who felt the most rapport were the ones whose videotaped movements had the greatest degree of mimicry and synchrony. The most striking synchrony is found among male / female couples in the process of moving from acquaintance to courtship, where the pair gradually turn more and more of their bodies toward each other, mirroring each other's gestures and touches, becoming absorbed in gazing at each other. Synchronization builds up from momentary and partial to full body synchronization, and new lovers can stay locked into this mode for hours (Perper 1985, 77–79).

Psychological experiments and detailed observations have shown that fine-honed mimicry and synchronization occur quite widely among humans. There is nevertheless a limitation on much of this research thus far. We know that synchronization and emotional contagion often happen, but there is less evidence on when it happens more, less, or not at all. Psychologists have tended to approach this issue by comparing individuals to find what character traits are related to being more susceptable or less susceptable to emotional contagion (Hatfield et al. 1994); what we miss is the dynamics that make some situations build up to high synchronization, while others fail. The experimental method fosters an orientation to individual traits, especially when research subjects are administered questionnaires asking them to describe their typical behavior and feelings, a method that abstracts away from the flow of situations. The radical microsociologist, on the other hand, is inclined to think that anyone can be molded into anything, given a strong enough situational process (or chain of such situations). In terms of figure 2.1, psychological experiments and micro-observational analysis alike have piled up evidence for shared mood, action in common, and, to some extent, rhythmic entrainment. What is largely missing is the mutual focus of attention. I suggest that this is what makes the difference between situations in which emotional contagion and all the other aspects of rhythmic entrainment build up to high levels, and those in which they reach only low levels or fail completely. This is above all what rituals do: by shaping assembly, boundaries to the outside, the physical arrangement of the place, by choreographing actions and directing attention to common targets, the ritual focuses everyone's attention on the same thing and makes

each one aware that they are doing so. This is the mechanism that needs more fine-grained research.

A convenient instrument for gauging the degree of solidarity that exists in an interaction is provided by the sociologist Stanford Gregory: a device for analyzing tape recordings of the sounds people make during conversation. By applying instrumentation for Fast Fourier Transform analysis (FFT) to conversation recordings, Gregory and his colleagues (1993, 1994) show that acoustical voice frequencies become attuned as conversations become more engrossing. This is rhythmic synchronization at a level much more fine-grained than the 0.2-second segments of which humans can be consciously aware. The micro-frequencies of voice tones in high-solidarity conversations converge on a fundamental frequency in a region of the sound spectrum below the range in which cognitively meaningful information is carried. If the higher-pitched frequencies are electronically removed (the ones that carry the content of what is being said), the recording sounds like a low-pitched buzz; it is quite literally this humming sound that is the "sound of solidarity." This suggests a nonintrusive, nonverbal means of researching solidarity in situations.

Synchronization of bodily movements has been found in large groups mobilized for collective action. One study of a macro-ritual, a political demonstration, found that the micro-coordination of movements among the demonstrators was much higher than a comparison group of ordinary pedestrians, and greater even than a marching band (Wohlstein and McPhail 1979). This is what we would expect if the demonstrators had the highest degree of emotional arousal and solidarity of these social groupings, feeding back into their shared actions and mutual focus of attention.

On the extreme micro-level, this synchronization must be unconscious. Synchronized gestures occur within time segments as rapid as 21 milliseconds (0.02 seconds), but humans are capable of overtly reacting to a stimulus only in 0.4 or 0.5 seconds, with some athletes capable of responding in 0.250 ms. (Kendon 1980; Hatfield et al. 1994, 38). Only slow playback of film frames reveals these patterns; indeed, people in conversation can synchronize their gestures in half of a film frame (42 ms.). Other synchronized behaviors, such as brain waves, or voice pitch range (how narrowly or widely the micro tones vary) are not even noticeable without specialized instruments. How, then, are people able to synchronize? The implication is that they have fallen into the same rhythm, so that they can anticipate where the next "beat" will fall. Chapple (1981) has called this *rhythmic entrainment*. Individuals who get into the flow of an interaction have made a series of adjustments that

bring their rhythms together; hence they can "keep the beat" with what their partner is doing by anticipation, rather than by reaction.

It is because of these shared rhythms that turn-taking can be so finely coordinated, so that in a high-solidarity conversation the gaps are less than 0.1 second, less than we can perceive without instruments. "I say: 'I'll talk to you *la*-ter,' and as I especially delineate the pacing of '*la*-ter,' with a precisely accented undulation, you tightly latch on to the pulsing of my moves and place your 'Goodbye' on the next downbeat to end the phone call" (Sudnow 1979, 114). In his book *Talk's Body* (1979), the ethnomethodologist David Sudnow compared the experience of learning to play jazz piano with the experience of producing a flow of words at a typewriter keyboard. Both, he noted, are bodily activities that become successful when it is no longer a matter of transcribing notes (either musical or verbal) but of throwing oneself into the rhythm of making musical phrases or sentences. Thus adults encourage small children in learning to talk, not by explaining what words mean, but by joining with them in a speech rhythm; initially this consists largely of nonsensical sounds or the same words playfully repeated over and over.

Emotional contagion is a socio-physiological fact. Sociophysiology (Barchas and Mendoza 1984) shows how an individual's physiological condition is affected by current and recent social experience. Face-to-face social interaction takes place among physiological systems, not merely among individuals as cognitive systems or bodily actors. From an evolutionary perspective, it is not surprising that human beings, like other animals, are neurologically wired to respond to each other; and that social situations that call forth these responses are experienced as highly rewarding.

Sociable conversation—talking just for the sake of keeping up friendly contact—is the most basic of all interaction rituals; and that solidarity is constructed and intensified within a ritual by rhythmic coordination. If the key process is to keep up the conversational flow, then what one says is chosen in order to keep up one's expected participation, not because one necessarily believes it, thinks it important, or has anything worthwhile to say. Conversation is thus doubly ritualistic: formally in the sense of following the patterns of the interaction ritual model; and substantively ritualistic (i.e., closer to the ordinary, pejorative use of the term) in the sense of going through the motions for the sake of the activity, rather than for its apparent content. The content of talk is chosen for the sake of the rhythms of interaction. In William Butler Yeats's phrase, these are "songs rewritten for the tune's sake."

Joint Attention as Key to Development of Shared Symbols

Rhythmic coordination and emotional entrainment are necessary ingredients of an IR; but it also requires a mutual focus of attention. This is what George Herbert Mead (1925, 1934) called taking the role of the other, and he proposed that it is the key to what makes human consciousness. The importance of mutual focus is demonstrated by a considerable body of research on cognitive development. Tomasello (1999) marshals evidence from experiments and observations on small children, chimpanzees and other primates, other mammals, as well as from comparisons with autistic children.

Human infants from soon after birth engage in turn-taking pseudo-conversations with adult caretakers; these interactions have the same finely modulated rhythmic back-and-forth flow of turns as high-solidarity talk. Infants also engage in affect attunement, matching and building up emotions. In our terminology, several components of the IR model are operative: bodily assembly, emotional entrainment, collective effervescence. We can also infer that one important outcome is present, a solidarity tie, at least in the form of attachment to a particular adult parent or caretaker. It seems also the case that infants are acquiring a level of emotional energy from these interactions. We can infer this from the negative case, where infants raised without much interaction with caretakers are deeply depressed (see research on WWII orphanages, and on monkeys fed by wire-dummy mothers rather than live mothers: Bowlby 1965; Harlow and Mears 1979). In terms of Mead's model of the "I," "me," and "Generalized Other," the infant engaging in this kind of rhythmic and emotional entrainment with an adult has none of these components of the self. There is an action component that Mead called the "I," but the baby's action is strongly entrained toward the adult, and thus consists largely in the emotional energy that is in the pattern of social solidarity. There is no cognitively independent "I."

Around nine to twelve months occurs a momentous change, which Tomasello refers to as "the nine-month revolution." Now the child is able to engage in joint attention with an adult, a scene in which both point to or carry out an action toward an object. This is a three-component interaction, involving two persons and the object to which they are jointly paying attention. The child now is showing not just an awareness of the object or of the other person, but an awareness that the other's focus is the same as his / her own focus. This is what IR theory calls the mutual focus of attention. The pointing or gesturing toward the object is often vocal—the act of naming and referring to the object; it is the beginning of language as a use of symbols that have

shared meaning (Bruner 1983). These vocal gestures are genuine symbols, not just "signs." They embody practical procedures for getting things done that have become habitual through the experience of practicing with a particular other person; they are mental references. From this time onward, children begin to learn to talk in the shared adult language. In contrast, autistic children, who have difficulty learning to speak, also have great difficulty with joint attention, as well as in playing with other children.

Tomasello interprets the process of joint attention as emerging from the child ascribing a sense of intentions to the other person, a desire that precedes the action; not that this is a consciously represented notion of the child as having an intentional self, which is projected onto the adult—since there is as yet no symbolic apparatus in which a child could formulate such a representation—but a recognition by the child that the other is "like me."

The full-scale IR model is now complete: on the ingredient side, there is now mutual focus of attention, joining and enhancing the already existing emotional entrainment; on the outcome side, shared symbols are now being created. There is another change in the child's behavior at this point. After age 1, shyness starts to emerge, as well as coyness around others and in front of mirrors; the child is developing a self-image from the viewpoint of other people. In the terminology of G. H. Mead, the child's self now has a "me," going along with the capacity to take the role of the other.

For the IR model, the "nine-month revolution" via joint attention or mutual focus is the crucial turning point, launching the child into the full-fledged human world of shared symbols. There remain many different ways in which persons can orient toward symbols, so let us trace the child's development, using Tomasello's summary, one stage further. Around age 3 to 5, children come to see other persons not only as intentional agents but as mental agents; that is, not only do they recognize that other people have an intention behind their actions, but they recognize them as having mental processes that are not necessarily expressed in action. The child at the "nine-month revolution" carries out joint attention with an adult and perceives the verbal gesture not merely as a physical movement that the adult is making with his / her mouth (similar to a physical gesture with a finger) but as an intentional reference, an action of communicating. The child is entering into a world of shared symbolic gestures, taking completely to heart what meaning the adult is communicating. The child at the three-to-five-year transition is now perceiving that what other persons say is not necessarily what they actually believe or what they will actually do; the child's universe has expanded to include the possibility of false

beliefs and lying. Put more positively, the child perceives that other people do not always see the world the same way they do, and that there are a variety of perspectives from which it can be seen.

The change is easiest to encompass in Mead's term, the "Generalized Other." This change makes the self's representation of the world more abstract; in addition to taking the perspective of particular other people and aligning oneself with them, the child now can take the perspective of other people in general, an intersection or resultant of all these perspectives. This changes the child's inner self as well. It is now possible both to internalize rules and increase the amount of self-direction under social influence, and simultaneously to have a stronger sense of self as an autonomous, self-reflective agent. These are the years that children become deliberately willful, the "terrible twos" and "terrible threes," when children show or flaunt increasing autonomy from parents' demands; this stage is a shift away from the very strong social embeddedness that follows directly from the joint attention consciousness in the "nine-month revolution."

And this is also the period when external talk begins to be internalized; children talking to themselves out loud, or to imaginery playmates, and then increasingly in subvocal self-talk, internal conversation. What is emerging is the additional level of reflexivity in Mead's theory of the self, in which the "I" can now deliberately manipulate symbolic representations, distancing itself from the here-and-now and from immediate social demands, to think of alternative pathways out of the situation. In this sense, Mead's conception of the "I" is an adult "I"; it emerges in this full reflexive sense as an independent agent only after the Generalized Other has crystallized.

Solidarity Prolonged and Stored in Symbols

High levels of emotional entrainment—collective effervescence—are ephemeral. How long will the solidarity and the emotional mood last? This depends on the transformation of short-term emotions into long-term emotions, which is to say, the extent to which they are stored in symbols that reinvoke them. Symbols, in turn, differ as to what kind of group solidarity they invoke, and thus what symbolic / emotional memories or meanings will do in affecting group interactions, and personal identities, in future situations.

Consider a range of situations where collective emotion is generated. At the lowest level are situations where a number of people are assembled, but with a very low focus of attention. Such would be people in a public waiting place like an airport departure lounge, or a queue lined

up for tickets. Here there is little common mood, possibly even impatience and annoyance because the focus of different individuals and subclusters are at cross purposes. Nothing is prolonged from these situations except the fleeting desire to get it over with and get out of there.

At a higher intensity are situations with a buzz of excitement: being on a busy street in a city, in a crowded restaurant or bar. There is a palpable difference between being in an establishment where there are lots of people and one that is nearly empty. Unfocused crowds generate more tacit interaction than very sparse assemblies, and thus give a sense of social atmosphere. Even though there is no explicit interaction or focus of attention in such places, there is a form of social attraction to being there. Being in a crowd gives some sense of being "where the action is," even if you personally are not part of any well-defined action; the lure of the "bright lights of the city" is not so much the visual illumination but the minimal excitement of being within a mass of human bodies.[20] As Durkheim indicates, the first step toward building up the "electricity" of collective effervescence is the move from sparse to dense bodily assembly. But in this alone there is little sense of solidarity with a recognizable group, and nothing that can prolong a sense of identification. What is lacking are symbols by means of which one could identify who was there, and that could reinvoke a sense of membership upon seeing them at another occasion.

A somewhat higher level of solidarity becomes possible in crowds that are focused by acting as an audience. Here the momentary sense of solidarity may become quite strong, insofar as the crowd takes part in a collective action—clapping, cheering, booing. These momentarily shared events, as we have seen, involve considerable micro-temporal coordination, a condition of collective entrainment that has very strong boundaries, intensely palpable when they are violated: one feels embarrassed when clapping at the wrong time or booing when others do not join in. The sense of collective solidarity and identity is stronger to just the extent that the crowd goes beyond being passive observers to actively taking part. This is an experience not only of responding to other people in the crowd (and to those on the stage, the playing field, or the podium) but of affecting them, thus becoming more of a part of the mutual entrainment by throwing oneself into it more fully.[21] Thus applause is no mere passive response; the pleasure of the performance is to a considerable degree created in those moments when one has the opportunity to applaud, and from the audience's side the performer or the political speech-maker is being used to facilitate one's own feeling of collective action. Such effects are visible in a very high degree in collective experience where the crowd becomes very active, and especially in destructive or violent acts. Thus taking part in an ethnic riot

(Horowitz 2001) is not simply a way of acting out a preexisting ethnic identity, but a way of strengthening it, re-creating or even creating it. The greater the entrainment, the greater the solidarity and identity consequences; and entrainment reaches much higher levels by activity than passivity.[22]

Often these focused crowds acquire a symbol that can prolong the sense of the experience: usually this symbol is taken from whatever it was that the audience was consciously focused upon. For sports fans, this is the team itself, usually encapsulated in shorthand emblems; for entertainment fans, it is the performers, or possibly the music, play, or film itself that becomes the Durkheimian sacred object. But focused crowds nevertheless have rather weak long-term solidarity; their symbols, although charged up by the crowd's moment of collective effervescence, do not reinvoke the crowd itself, which on the whole is anonymous to most of its participants.[23] There is no way for members of the group to recognize each other or identify with each other, except via what they clapped for. Those who happened to be together at an exciting moment at a sports stadium do not have much of a tie afterward. They may share some collective symbols, such as wearing the same team emblem, but their solidarity is rather situationally specific, reserved for those occasions when they happen to be at another sporting event, or in some area of conversation around just those symbols. These are examples of secondary group identities: groups whose members do not know each other personally. Benedict Anderson (1991) famously called them "imagined communities," but this is not quite accurate. What they imagine—what they have an image of—is the symbol that they focus upon, and the "community" is a volatile and episodic experience that comes out just at moments of high ritual intensity.

Focused crowds develop their collective effervescence in those moments when they are active rather than passive spectators. But since their feeling of solidarity is prolonged by symbols that are for the most part presented to them from outside, they do not have much opportunity to use those symbols in their own lives, as ingredients for constructing similarly engrossing IRs. These are passively received symbols that must wait to be recharged when there next occurs a performance of the concert, the game, or the political assembly. At best, they can recirculate the symbols in a second-order, conversational ritual, a reflexive meta-ritual referring to these primary rituals.

In contrast to these situations where symbols are charged up by anonymous crowds, are situations that charge symbols with specific group membership. On the level of individualized encounters, personal ties are generated and enacted through IRs that produce a momentary level of intersubjectivity that is attractive enough to be re-

peated. I have already noted how the use of personal names is a ritual affirming the individual character of the relationship. Calling someone by their name during the course of an encounter is not just a demonstration that one knows that person's name; these rituals of personal address are typically carried out repeatedly, in virtually every encounter, even where it should be obvious from earlier encounters that the person's name is known. What is communicated is that one thinks of that person as an individual, and that this is a situation in which he or she is being treated as an individual, with a biography, a past history of relationships, in short, an IR chain. And the ritual of personal address is collective (at least in sociable situations), carrying the sense that it ought to be reciprocated, that each should call the other by his / her name; it is the enactment of a tie, individual person to individual person. An illuminating contrast is tribal societies where members of the same kinship group often do not know each other's personal names: they refer to each other, and address each other, by a title or relationship term—wife, sister's brother, second son.[24] There are corresponding situations in Western societies where individuals are referred to not by their names but by their title or position. These encounters are further down the continuum of relationships from the ritually marked meshing of individualized IR chains, but not all the way down to merely situationally anonymous coparticipation like members of a momentarily focused crowd; these are intermediate situations where there is recognition of where one fits in a group, but not of what distinguishes oneself as an individual within it.

Personal name-address rituals are a version of symbols that are used to prolong membership from one situation to the next. They also illustrate the point that the greater degree of symbolic memory and membership prolongation is connected to a greater degree of personal identification with those symbols. For a modern Western person, there is generally nothing more intensely personal than one's own name. But as our cross-societal comparisons show, there is nothing inherent or natural in identifying oneself and others as a unique individual; it is the ongoing flow of everyday name-addressing rituals that keep up these identities both as to our selves and as to others.

Contributing to a similar level of prolonged personal membership identities are the everyday conversational rituals of personal narratives. The contents of this talk are such things as what one did that day, or stories about one's experiences from the past. Much of the exchange of friendly relationships is the willingness for both sides in turn to act as a sympathetic audience to these stories, and also to take one's turn on the stage and offer some narratives of one's own. We may think of this as a circulation of particularistic cultural capital, in contrast to

the generalized cultural capital that is widely available and known to larger groups, who do not necessarily know each other as personal identities. No doubt, much of the content of talk in these personal narrations is "filler," material to fill up the time spent together so that there is something to talk about. These personal narratives do not have to be true, they need mainly to be dramatic, to blow up the little mishaps of everyday life into adventures or comedies, minor adversities into martyrdoms and local scandals, in order to become good raw material for the dramatic performances on the conversational stage that make for a lively and engrossing conversation. What Goffman noted about staged performances in general holds here for conversational ritual in particular: the audience enters into the spirit of the performance by not questioning it but by taking it in a situational mood, whatever will build up the highest level of momentary collective effervescence. Successful conversations of this sort generate and cement social ties, which by the particularistic nature of their contents are ties into particular social relationships.

Sociable talk also typically involves talking about third persons, especially those known to the participants. These narratives expand the dramatic material that can be used for enhancing the success of the conversational ritual. They have a further effect, structurally very important for the prolongation of group membership: these third-person narrations, or gossip, circulate the identities of individuals within the network of those who talk to each other (Fuchs 1995). Both individual names and narratives about them are symbols, which get charged up with significance through the amount of momentary effervescence of the conversations in which they play a part.

Thus a person can become a symbol both by direct observation—the way a politician, a religious leader, or a sports figure can become an emblem for those who have seen this person in the focus of a collective ritual—and by indirect observation, by having stories and qualities attached to that person's name insofar as they are subjects for lively conversations. Whether they are positive or negative does not matter so much as the intensity with which the name figures in these conversational dramas. The accuracy of these accounts is a minor consideration in successful conversational ritual, and the further the network goes from the source, the less of a consideration it becomes at all.

This pattern applies not only to the famous, widespread reputations known among persons anonymous to each other, but also to persons whose reputations are merely local, confined to particular networks of persons who have personal links with the person being gossiped about. In the latter case, the circulation of reputation plays back into face-to-face encounters; when you meet someone of whom you have

heard stories or descriptions, or who has heard about you, you are now participants in a conversation that has an additional layer of depth. It is not just the immediate symbol-repertoire that each person has to talk about with the other that determines what will be said and what kind of relationship will be enacted, but the halo or penumbra of reputation that each has in the mind of the other figures into what conversational moves will be made and how those moves are interpreted.

I have couched the analysis in terms of sociable conversations, in relationships that are friendly and casual. The same kinds of creation and prolongation of membership and identity goes on in more serious interactions, including the utilitarian encounters of business and professional life. Encounters in the world of work also have the structure of IRs, charging up cultural items with membership significance. These items include the communication that is part of the work itself, as well as work-related discussions that go on in backstage debriefing and strategizing, and that carry over into quasi-sociable shop talk. The cultural symbols thus given significance consist both in the occupational lore in a more general sense—the technical jargon that engineers use about their equipment, the financial shorthand of stockbrokers and investment bankers, the style of negotiating among business executives in a particular branch of industry—but also of the particular information that people in that network talk about. Entrée into and success within a particular occupational network is not only a matter of having the generalized cultural capital of that group—that which is known widely among persons who may not be acquainted with each other— but also of having particular knowledge of who did what, who has what track record, who has been connected to whom, "where the bodies are buried." The latter form of knowledge or particularized cultural capital or symbolic repertoire may well be the most important kind, especially for the dynamics of fluidly moving situations, such as business transactions where time is of the essence, or analogously for scientists or other intellectuals attempting to innovate on the cutting edge before someone else does so. Here too, as in the world of private sociability, symbolic reputations are amplified to higher levels in networks that have enough redundant social ties so that symbols circulate in at least some closed loops, reinforcing the significance of a symbol because it is heard from all sides, and probably exaggerated in the retelling.[25] What needs emphasizing is not simply that these are specialized languages or local knowledge, but that these are membership symbols that are effective to just the degree that they have an emotional loading. The concept of utilitarian communications at work might seem to rule out their having an emotional quality, but this is a mistake. It is precisely those business or professional encounters that have a special

excitement, tension, or enthusiasm to them that turn those items of communication into charged symbols; they become "buzzwords" in the original, nonpejorative sense, items that carry a buzz of cutting-edge significance.

In sum, there are several distinctive ways in which symbols circulate and prolong group membership beyond ephemeral situations of emotional intensity. One is as objects that are in the focus of attention of emotionally entrained but otherwise anonymous crowds. The second is as symbols built up out of personal identities and narratives, in conversational rituals marking the tie between the conversationalists and the symbolic objects they are talking about.[26] These symbols generally operate in two quite different circuits of social relationships; typically, the symbols of audiences, fans, partisans, and followers circulate from one mass gathering to another, and tend to fade in the interim; the symbols of personal identities and reputations are the small change of social relationships (and of business relationships), generally of lesser momentary intensity than audience symbols but used so frequently and in self-reinforcing networks so as to permeate their participants' sense of reality.[27]

Both the generalized symbols of mass audiences and the particularized symbols of personal networks prolong the emotional loadings of IRs. They do so in differing time-patterns and subject to differing contingencies. Generalized mass-audience symbols are dependent upon the reassembling of big groups, and individual members of those groups usually have little initiative in whether the big assembly will come about or come off. And since these generalized symbols do not usually get a comparable recharging of their emotional level through the ordinary interactions of everyday life, they are prone to greater volatility. This is what characterizes political and religious movements; and insofar as there are generally shared economic symbols (a stock market index; the prestige of a particular hot-selling product), these too are subject to volatile swings in their collective significance, and hence in their social and economic value.[28] On the other hand, particularized symbols of individual identities and memberships in networks personally known to their participants have greater inertia. That does not mean they are fixed; identities and reputations are capable of changing, especially if the links among particular persons who make up a network change, and all the more so if the network shifts between more redundant and more sparsely linked forms. These changes in membership and reputation are especially important in the realm of professional and business relationships; indeed, it is just these shifts that make up a career.

The Creation of Solidarity Symbols in 9/11

The contrast between personal membership ties and impersonal symbols of anonymous crowds can be observed quite starkly in a single event: the destruction of the World Trade Center towers in the September 11, 2001 attacks. The case also shows the dynamic and emergent quality of symbols, the further layers in which they can be circulated, and the uses to which symbols can be put once they have been created. I base the analysis on "9/11," a documentary film consisting of live footage of firefighters and street crowds during the attack (Naudet and Naudet 2002).

Applying IR theory, it is apparent that for the anonymous crowds in and near the towers, the destroyed towers themselves did not become a symbol of group solidarity, but the firefighters became their symbol; whereas for the firefighters, the destroyed towers became their symbol. Let us see how this came about.

The video shows people in the streets in the moments after the first plane hit the towers and during their collapse. What was an unfocused crowd becomes a focused crowd, or set of crowds—not particularly dense, but comprising clusters of ten or twenty people visible at the same time in the film. The smoke draws their attention; they stare in the same direction, utter exclamations, align themselves more closely together. The early mood that they express is wonder, surprise, an increasing sense of shock. Aside from the shared focus, there is not much interaction or talk in the street crowds. From the lack of Goffmanian tie signs, it appears that the crowds are made up of strangers to each other, drawn together only by the shared event. At first, they are passive spectators. Later, as debris fills the air and the buildings begin to fall, they run away; their action spreads the crowds out even more; we see individuals here and there darting down the street. Many of those who are nearest to the towers, or who had come out of the buildings, display expressions of being stunned.

For the most part, the video does not show strongly expressed and socially communicated emotion. There are not even very frequent expressions of fear. There are some scenes of workers inside one of the towers coming down from the stairs above and passing through the upper lobby on their way outside; they appear quiet and orderly, not panicking, scrambling, or pushing. It appears here that the very orderliness of the crowd has set the contagious mood, and keeps down the experience of fear. (This would follow from William James's theory of emotions: running away makes one afraid; and a crowd running will make its members even more afraid.)
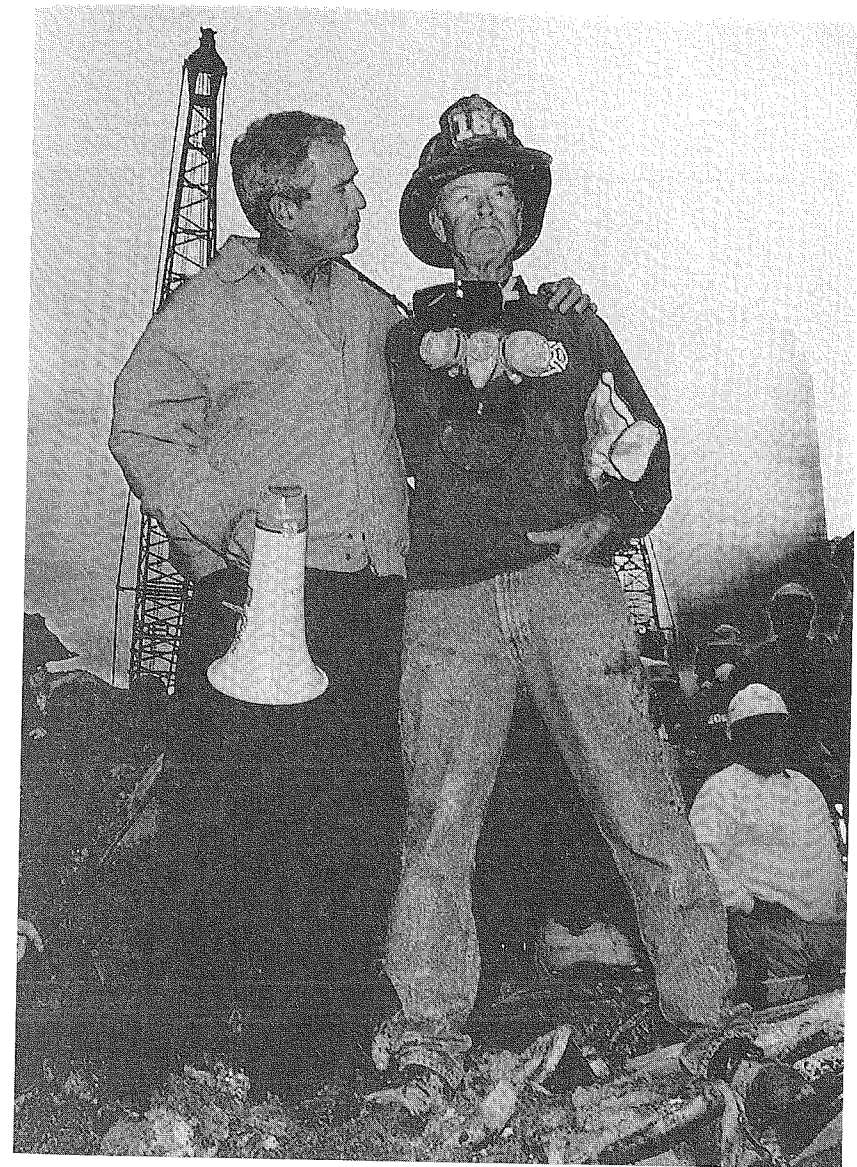

Figure 2.6 NY City firefighter in process of becoming hero symbol (September 14, 2001).
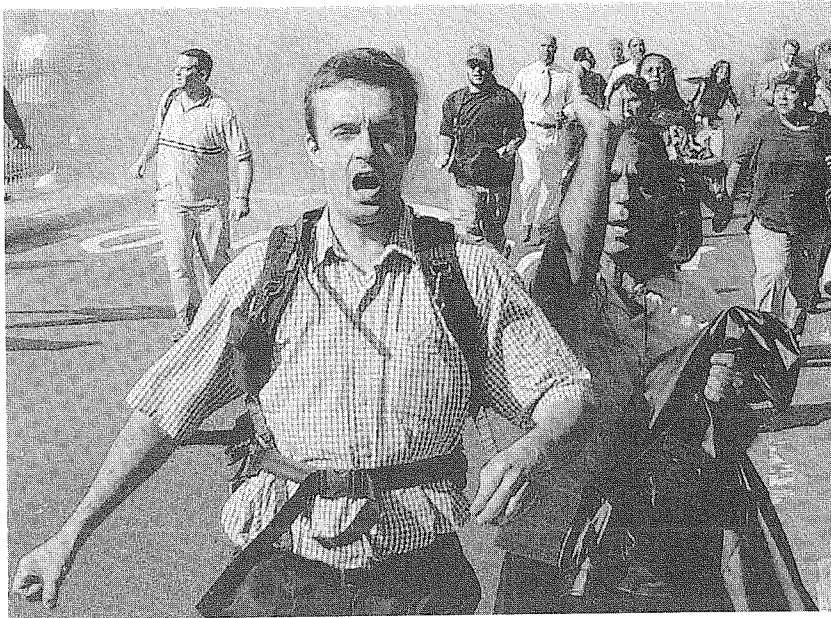
Figure 2.7 Street crowd running from World Trade Center area as first tower collapses (September 11, 2001).

The only expressions of fear visible on the film are occasionally by persons in the street crowd. Looking at these instances in detail we see that these are physically isolated individuals, not those who are close together and talking to each other, but bodily separated on the fringes or in sparser parts of the crowd on the street.

Compare the firefighters, whom we see during their prior routine in the firehouse, in vehicles on the way to the towers, inside the tower lobby, and finally upon returning to the firehouse afterward. The firefighters show no overt expression of fear on the film. Nor do they show any expression of "courage" as a special emotion; this is just an interpretation placed on their behavior after the fact. The firefighters follow the normal routine of doing their job. This is what enables them to be unafraid, since it gives them something to do other than to flee; and they are doing it collectively. It is also the case that they have no sense, at least at first, that anything unusually dangerous is happening; i.e., there is a special difficulty in that the fire is seventy stories high in a building in which the elevators are not working and so they have to climb stairs to get to the fire. But this is their normal job, to get to a fire and put it out. There is no indication at the command post (which is where most of the firefighters on the video are shown) that anyone

thinks there is danger of the building collapsing, since the fire is far above. Even after lights go out, electricity is off, debris starts falling, and the commanders order firefighters to evacuate, the commanders still act calmly looking for exits, not hurrying, not panicking.

One might argue that the firefighters are trained, and experienced, at doing this sort of thing—confronting fires in big buildings; occasionally there must be danger of a building collapsing, but that seems to be a remote issue not much considered. There is presumably a routine concern over becoming burned or asphyxiated, but these are normal dangers, and the sheer size of the World Trade Center building does not add anything different to their subjective experience. But it should be emphasized that "training" per se does not guarantee performance in situations of stress; there is considerable evidence that police and army training does not prevent a large proportion of soldiers from freezing up in combat, or police officers from firing wildly and incompetently (Keegan 1977; Collins forthcoming).

"Training" is not simply a matter of learning; it is above all establishing identity with the group who carry out their skills collectively. Maintaining collective identity is an ongoing activity, an IR chain; and it is this that we see in the video of the firefighters. The "courage" that outsiders interpet the firefighters as having is a version of Chambliss's (1989) "mundanity of excellence"—the sense that members of an elite occupation have that their situation, for themselves if not for outsiders, is a routine one, where they can accomplish what others cannot, by focusing carefully on their skills and not being distracted by anything else. In this case, they are not being distracted by fear; their collective focus and their routine excludes it from the center of their experience. IR theory adds that the mundanity of excellence is based on group participation, collective focus and mood, keeping each other calm and focused on the routine task. Doing one's job collectively under stress is the result, and it feeds back into their group identity and solidarity.

The video shows considerable indications of solidarity among the firefighters both before and after the attack. Prior to going out to the towers, the filmmakers had filmed the group's routine for a month. They had concentrated on the induction of a new, probationary firefighter into the group, who goes through mild hazing rituals such as doing the scut-work of the fire station, and who is given encouragement by experienced firefighters as they look forward to his real initiation when he would take part in his first big building fire. The video also shows group solidarity at the end of the day, when firefighters come back to the station, hug each other, greeting each other warmly for having survived and returned. From subsequent footage we see that the firefighters treat the stationhouse as their home; this is where

they prefer to gather after the disaster, rather than individually with their families.

The contrast between the firefighters and the street crowds shows a highly focused, high-solidarity group drawing emotional strength—not blatant enthusiasm, but a quiet form of EE—from going on together with a difficult task; while less focused, low-solidarity crowds show shock, and in the thinnest parts of the crowd, fear. The solidarity that the firefighters already have, and that they recycle and increase through their experience of working together in the disaster, is just what is lacking among the crowds in the streets, the latter have no prior identity, only the momentary focus on the building they see on fire, and later on, collapsing. They lack social strong support, and lack anything to do that has ongoing collective significance.

Nevertheless the crowd has many of the ingredients of a natural IR: bodily assembly, mutual focus of attention, shared mood. Why don't individuals in the crowd transform the shared shock and fear into solidarity? Rituals are emotion transformers, and can turn negative emotions into positive ones. The members of the crowd are all focused on the towers, which they see burning and collapsing; why don't the towers become a symbol of membership? The towers represent a very negative experience, but that in itself is not a bar to becoming a group symbol. The symbol of Christianity, the cross, is an emblem of an extremely negative event, a crucifixion; it is a symbol of undergoing suffering as a form of ritual consecration and emerging through it strengthened and triumphant. In fact something like this emerges from the 9/11 disaster, too, with the great upsurge of national solidarity in the following days and months. The image of the towers burning and collapsing is an ephemeral event in time, but it was recorded and repetitively displayed on television and in news photos during the subsequent hours and days. The image was available to become transformed into a symbol, but it was not—at least not for the crowd of witnesses, both those nearby and those further away who witnessed it through the mass media.

Structurally, the street crowds had no way to reassemble, to bring itself back together as a group. They had no identity as a group, except as those who were eyewitnesses to the disaster. But this itself was a group with vague boundaries, made up of those in the towers themselves, those nearby on the streets experiencing different degrees of awareness of what was going on, and shading into those who were watching or hearing about the events on the mass media or by hearsay as they unfolded. This group never crystallized an identity. What did crystallize was the dual identities of "New Yorkers"—an encompassing membership of everyone in the city, even though the vast ma-

jority were no more closely involved in the disaster than people outside the city; and "Americans," as the national unit who was the target of the attack. Thus during the coming days and weeks people began to display symbols combining those two identities: hats, shirts, and other emblems of New York, and American flags. Above all, what tied together these symbols, was the main emergent symbol of the event: the firefighters, as emblems of solidarity and courage.

The video shows, however, that the firefighters do not see themselves in the same light as the crowds of spectators, and later admirers. In the firefighters' self-perception, they have failed: they did not reach the fire, nor put it out, nor save anyone from the fire. They have renewed their solidarity through their greetings to each other when they arrived back at the station, but there is no feeling of triumph. The collapsed buildings are a strong focus of attention for them; a negative symbol that draws them back. They display a strong desire to go back to the site and start digging through rubble for survivors; a need to feel that they have accomplished something. They are affirming their identity as the group that worked through the disaster, in a symbolic way taking possession of the disaster.

The digging through the ruins is to a considerable extent a ritualistic action. Given the scope of the damage, it is extremely unlikely that anyone will be found alive, and no one is. Nevertheless it is an obsession to be there, and to go through the motions, the action itself keeping hope alive. The video shows their collective focus while digging in rubble, heightened at moments when they cry "quiet!" and pass along the cry; ostensibly this is in order to listen for possible victims, but it has the effect of focusing the attention of the group, giving themselves more collective energy. They pass the buckets of rubble rapidly at first, but in subsequent clips they are working more slowly. The initial emotion gradually wears off. Nevertheless, seven-and-a-half weeks later (New York Times, Nov. 3, 2001) when in a more realistic and utilitarian attitude, the mayor's office declares the site closed to any further spontaneous, voluntary action by the firefighters so that it can be cleared by heavy equipment, there are emotional fights that take place between firefighters and the police attempting to enforce the closure order. The firefighters treat the site as a sacred place that belongs to them, and react with outrage that they are being excluded from it.

Two kinds of ritualistic actions go on in the 9/11 event, and one plays into and becomes the symbolic material for the other. The firefighters already have ritual solidarity and group identity; but they have suffered losses to their ranks, and perhaps even more, to their sense of professional pride; hence they seize upon the demolished buildings as a symbolic place to affirm their collective participation.

Figure 2.8 NY firefighters struggle with police over access to WTC site. Fire-fighters wear full paraphernalia for symbolic effect, although salvage work had previously been done in casual work dress (November 2, 2001).

Their ritual is to go back to the demolition site and look for dead bodies; since the site implicitly belongs to them alone—they are the only ones who are allowed to be there—it strongly affirms their identity as exclusively at the core of the event, and at the center of its emotions.

The passive crowd of witnesses, nearby and more remote, have no strongly organized basis for identity; but their attention is drawn from the initial focus, the buildings, to the firefighters and their symbolic activity. In the hours and early days after the collapse, coming back from digging, the firefighters are greeted by crowds lining the streets waving American flags. These are the images picked up by the media and broadcast widely, adopted nation-wide as symbols. On the video, the firefighters say they don't feel like heroes—since they haven't done anything, haven't accomplished anything, in fact have failed to do their job. From the inside, in their subjective experience, they are not symbols for themselves; what they see as a symbol is something outside themselves, their collapsed towers.[29]

Occupying another layer of social reality is the experience of the spectators. In seizing on firefighters as heroes, the crowd is focusing on the persons with the most EE, confidence, and purpose; they make them emblems of their own collective solidarity in the face of the disaster; and they participate with them by cheering them. They also associ-

ate the several emblems together: American flags, New York City emblems,[30] and firefighters. These symbols are repeatedly brought together over the coming weeks and months, as large-scale ritual gatherings are enacted: at sporting events, music concerts, as well as political assemblies. At this point, the symbols are circulating in a chain of self-reinforcing IRs; the presence of symbols charged up with emotion, fresh in memory, motivates and facilitates creating these new ceremonial gatherings; and the renewal of emotion by the crowd's focus of attention at those ceremonies charges the symbols again, making them ready for the next round of use.

These video recordings, together with subsequent reporting of events, document the successive layers of short-term and long-term effects of IRs. There is the raw experience, which we have seen through two vantage-points, the perspective of the onlooking crowds and that of the firefighters called into action. Next comes the transformation of those experiences into symbols; here the different kinds of participants choose different aspects of what they witness to make into emblems of emotional remembrance and group solidarity. The first of these is momentary, situational intersubjectivity; the second is the prolongation and re-creation of experience on another order, as symbolically crystallized intersubjectivity. Yet more temporally remote, and more remote, too, in the kinds of social networks involved, is a second order of circulation of newly created symbols among persons who are far away from the initial experiences. Further out in time, the reflexive use of symbols becomes more contrived, more overlaid with the practical contingencies of staging ceremonies, increasingly entwined with the politics of self-display and factional advantage as the new symbols sediment onto the layer of old symbols already in normal social routine. In this larger context of use, the emotional intensity that the symbols had while fresh begins to cool, their life dependent, like all symbols, on the intensity of the gatherings in which they will again be invoked.

Rules for Unraveling Symbols

The world is full of symbols. Some are our own, meaningful to ourselves in one degree or another. Some are markers of other groups, sharply visible where they mark boundaries against enemies or distrusted outsiders, or exclusions upward or downward in felt rank. Others are only episodically or dimly perceived. We are surrounded by a vast spectrum of symbols and group identities, some living, some dying or dead; some are living but their significances are invisible to

us in our particular locations, since we are not close enough to feel what they convey.

It is a fallacy to take symbols at face value, as if we can read their meaning from what participants say they mean. It is as naïve as a child who thinks that "How are you?" means a request for information about their health; or an awkward teenager who treats "How are things going?" as calling for a simple reassurance instead of as a ploy to find a topic to chat about. We are in much the same position if we treat religious symbols as if they were a self-sufficient explanation of what people who invoke them do.

The tribes of the Baliem valley of highland New Guinea say they will not fight at night because spirits of the dead are out after dark, and so they must stay in their huts (Garner 1962). But this is hardly an adequate explanation in the context of the tribe's normal routine. The tribes, engaged in endless feuding with their neighbors in raids and set-piece battles at their frontier, limit the amount of fighting in many ways. They settle for one death or serious injury at a time, which suffices to end the battle and start off into a round of ceremonies in the villages. Even when no one is hurt, they take tacitly agreed upon rest breaks during a day of battle; they call off a battle when it starts to rain, in order not to spoil their war make-up; they do not attack during days when the enemy is carrying on a funeral or a victory celebration. The spirits of the dead that are invoked in explanation of why they do not fight at night are part of a larger routine of agreements and justifications that limit most of their fighting to particular times and places. The gatherings of the tribes to fight one another are the most intense and most important membership rituals of the group, and it is from and around this that other symbolic representations are formed and sustained. The spirits who are supposed to be out at night occupy a similar part of the symbolic universe, as does the spirit of the last dead person to be killed by the enemy, whose restlessness is regarded within the tribal culture as impelling the warriors to go back to the battlefield for revenge. More simply put: their battles are chained together as a series of rituals reaffirming membership through enmity; their religious symbols are reminders of the emotions felt during each battle, and especially in their high points where someone is killed, which operate to reinvoke the next ritual in the chain.

Contemporary evidence confirms the dependence of religious beliefs upon social interaction (Stark and Bainbridge 1985). Persons who join religious cults typically are not to any great extent acquainted with, nor committed to, the beliefs of the cult before they join it. They are initially attracted to the cult because they are brought by friends, relatives, and acquaintances. Their belief grows as they take part in the

cult activities. In mainstream churches as well, those who have the strongest adherence to its doctrines are those who have the most personal friends who are also members; social ties brings ritual participation, and this brings belief. And those without close ties in a cult or church tend to drop out, and their belief fades away.

To invoke the content of an item of culture gives us a description of some cognitive aspects of a chain of social situations. The cultural framing or native justification of the action is at best an ad hoc explanation of it. Why do they do it? Because they say X; or because that is the way that people do things in X part of the world. This may be on the way to an explanation, but it is no final resting place for a sociological theory.

In support of a cultural approach, Garfinkel's (1967) statement is often quoted, that the person is not a "judgmental dope." If this is taken to mean that the person is not simply pushed around by shared cultural rules, that is accurate enough. But if it is set forth as a claim that persons are aware of the sources of their own behavior, or even their own thoughts and emotions, it is surely wrong. We operate through an emotional magnetism toward and repulsion from particular thoughts and situations in the flow of everyday life; we are seldom reflective about this, and are often grossly inaccurate in our assessments when we are reflective.

Social action has a very large unconscious component. It is unconscious precisely because by focusing our attention upon a collective object of action, or upon symbols derived from it, our attention is defocused from the social process in which we are entrained while doing so. To be sure, on special occasions we may move into the observer mode, and make an object of attention out of the very social action that we were once unreflectively embedded in. But this puts us into a different situation, that of the second-order observer, where we are no longer an actor.[31] Action itself always reduces reflexivity, and induces a belief in the symbols and symbolically framed objects that fill out attention at that moment.

Thus I conclude with some rules for unraveling symbols. Sociological research works best if we can start with interaction rituals and move forward, witnessing how the intensity and focus of the interaction generates symbols to be used in subsequent interactions. But there are times when we are confronted with the symbol already made. How are we to go about interpreting its social meaning?

To begin, judge how intensely symbolic the item is. Is it treated with respect, as a sacred object, as a realm apart from ordinary life? Is it given a spatially separate zone, a special physical location that is approached only with care? Are there special qualifications as to who can

approach, and who is excluded? Is it emotionally and vehemently and self-righteously defended? Conversely, does it attract vehement attackers, also self-righteous in their attacks? Is it treated as an item of more than personal value, proclaimed as a value that is or ought to be widely shared? Is it regarded as incommensurate with merely utilitarian values? Such claims to far-reaching value are equally characteristic of positive and negative symbols; especially intensely charged are those symbols that are positive to some persons, negative to others.

Our analysis is usually attracted to those symbols most highly charged in these respects. But we may notice as well what appear to be bygone symbols, neglected sacred places, vestiges of once-frequented emblems now in decay, like monuments in public parks covered with pigeon droppings, or defaced with graffiti, an overlay of one emblem upon another.

Next, reconstruct as best as possible what IRs have surrounded that emblem. Who assembled, in what numbers, with what frequency or schedule? What emotions were expressed, what activities brought a focus of attention, what intensity of collective effervescence was generated? To what degree were individual participants charged with emotional energy; and what did it motivate them to do? What were the barriers to participation: who was divided by the ritual from whom? Who was thereby ranked over whom?

We attempt to put together a history of ritual participation around the symbols that we see surviving today, or sticking up in the distance from the sands of social interaction where we do not ordinarily tread. Sometimes this becomes an ideal for historical reconstruction; if need be, a conjectural history, since even a hypothetical scheme of who did what ritual action is a better guide to conceptualizing the meaning of symbols than taking those symbols as freestanding and unaffected by social process. For the most part, except when dealing with remote history, we are in a better situation as researchers, and the rules for unraveling symbols becomes a guide to a research program.

Further, our task does not end at reconstructing those primal moments when the ritual was in full blast, at its most intense. We are concerned too with tracing the secondary circulation of symbols. Who uses these emblems (including their verbal representations and other emblems-of-emblems) for other interactional situations beyond the actual gathering of the group of ritual participants? What are the range of situations in which these symbols circulate? Do they become topics for rounds of conversation with acquaintances; for injection into other public ceremonial; for debate with opponents of those ritual practices? We have, in short, a primary realm of living rituals and the symbols that they charge with significance; and a secondary realm where those

symbols become circulated in the IRs that make up the surrounding social networks, whether taken as positive or negative emblems, or just treated reflexively as items of news, gossip, reputation. They become representations of groups who are somewhere else, at a distance.

Finally, there is a further, third order in which symbols circulate: what individuals do with them when they are alone, outside the presence of other people. Do they physically carry the symbols around with them, or access them alone, like a religious person carrying an emblem or visiting a shrine? The most intimate level of circulation is inside individuals' minds, in the inner conversations that make up thinking, in the fantasies that make up the inner self. This third order of symbolic circulation is even harder to get at than the second order; but we may as well list it here, since I am laying out a maximal program, an ideal for the sociology of rituals and symbolic life to aim at even if it may be largely unattainable for the present state of research. We might as well say that this is a sociology to dream about, and indeed, it encompasses a sociology of dreams. For if dreams take place in images, those images are internalized or synthesized out of pieces internalized from the circulation of symbols on the first and second orders of social interaction, and from the thinking that takes place in the waking mind. Let us go all the way in our ambitions: a complete sociology of the circulation of symbols would be a sociology of humans' inner lives as well as their external lives. The research task is to move forward, from what evidence we have of where charged up symbols exist publically, to fill in more and more of the histories of how they have been formed and circulated.

To end with a brief illustration: In late-twentieth-century America, guns in the hands of civilians became an object of widespread public attention. Many of their proponents treat guns in just the way that we would consider, under the above criteria, as symbolic objects—that is, as a gun cult. Their opponents too treat them as abnormally negative, as emblems of evil. From either side, guns are treated with special respect, given as special status. They occupy distinctive places: on gun racks in trucks, in display cases in homes. The very efforts of opponents to keep them locked up, fitted with trigger guards, kept apart from children, have the effect of further emphasizing their special character and the special status of those who have access to them. To be sure, these restrictions and the physical segregation of guns are often consciously motivated in utilitarian terms, as safety practices; but utilitarian justifications often overlay symbolic practices and reinforce rather than undermine them.

Considerable discourse is devoted to justifications of guns, and to critiques of those justifications. Guns are justified because it is the constitu-

tional right of Americans to possess guns; because they are part of the American heritage of liberty, and represent a stand against the encroaching power of the government; because they are used for sport shooting and hunting; because they are weapons of defense against criminals, a bolster to the forces of good against the already well-armed forces of evil. The sociologist of rituals does not take these arguments at face value. Aside from various inconsistencies in the arguments and practices themselves,[32] it is not a sociological explanation of behavior to invoke the reasons given, especially on occasions of public justification and debate over already existing practices. Instead we should ask, Why do particular people come to believe in these reasons, or rather, in what circumstances do they invoke them? Did they have these beliefs first and as the result of so believing did they decide that they should acquire guns? Or did they acquire the guns first—if religious practices are any clue, because of induction from friends and acquaintances who already had guns—and then acquired the verbal justifications?

Then we must ask, What is it that possessors of guns do? Is their activity intensely ritualistic enough so that we might call them members of the gun cult (or indeed, of different kinds of gun cults)? Are guns put in the center of attention of group assemblies, surrounded with a shared mood? Here we may investigate the primary ritual that goes on at gun shows, firing ranges, gun dealers' shops. Examine the ritualistic aspects of hunting, with special traditions and procedures of the male outdoors-expedition. Intermediate on a continuum of group exclusiveness and identification would be gun theme parks, fantasy exercises with pseudo-weapons (such as paintball fighting ranges). Most intensely cultist of all are paramilitary groups and their war exercises.

We would want to study, too, the second-order circulation of gun symbols. On the most banal level: When do people talk about guns, and with whom?[33] Is there a sharp disjunction in the form of talk between those who possess guns (i.e., those who take part in primary gun rituals) and those who do not? Further out in the symbolic circulation are the ways in which emblematic representations of guns are publicized in the news, in statements of politicians, and, of course, in the mass media of entertainment.[34] All these can recirculate back into the immediate conversational circles of people who have guns, shaping or reinforcing their emotional resonances with their weapons. In general, we might expect that the existence of a vehement public discourse, the political controversy pro and con guns, will intensify the boundaries; outside opposition would encourage a stronger sense of membership inside the gun cult, perhaps making some old-fashioned hunters into more intensely ritualistic supporters of guns as symbolic emblems.[35]

Finally, there is the third level of circulation of symbols, their use by individuals privately, alone. Some of this is visible in ritualistic action, insofar as there are actual objects that can be manipulated: guns that people spend their time holding, taking apart, cleaning and reassembling, looking at and admiring. Many individuals who are intensely involved with guns spend much of their leisure time reloading ammunition; a large part of the display at gun shows are equipment and supplies for reloading spent shells with live charges. There is some utilitarian element in this, insofar as reloading one's own ammunition is cheaper than buying it fresh; but the long hours that gun cultists spend on reloading ammunition suggests that this is a ritualistic affirmation of their membership, something like a member of a religious cult engaging in private prayer, in actual physical contact with the sacred objects, like fingering the beads of a rosary.

On the most intimate level of symbolic circulation, we would like to know who thinks about guns, and in what kinds of inner conversations, or imaginery situations? In what chains of interactions are these thinking-occasions embedded? And what are the consequences of these inner thoughts and fantasy scenarios? For which people—for which kinds of IR chains—do gun thoughts remain inward and harmless; and for which chains of inner and outer interactions do gun symbols reemerge into action? An extreme instance would be the brooding of the teenager who takes the gun to school to avenge an insult, acting out the practices that he has gone through before on the firing range.

These are difficult questions to research, but from the perspective of IR theory, not impossible ones. Thoughts are internalized from the symbols of first-order and second-order rituals; and they are charged up with emotional energy from what happens at each moment of flow in that chain that makes up an individual personality. A sociology of thinking is just another component problem, if an especially difficult one, for a sociology of IR chains.

Much of the symbolic experience of everyday life is not so dramatic as the examples I have sketched here. But our aim throughout is the same: to keep the action of IRs in the center of analysis, whether we can observe it easily, or whether we must reconstruct it from any and all available clues. We will see how this is done in subsequent chapters, including the formation of sex symbols in chapter 6, and of tobacco symbols in chapter 8, where we can observe not only the creation of symbolic practices, but their rise and fall.