

# Chapter 1

## Authenticity in Culture, Self, and Society

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### Framing Authenticity

In their 2007 book entitled *Authenticity: What Consumers Really Want*, James Gilmore and Joseph Pine argue that contemporary industrial and information societies are being commodified and virtualized, with everyday life becoming saturated with “toxic levels of inauthenticity [that] we’re forced to breathe” (43). The authors cite a variety of issues to support their claim, including the ideas that most of the emails we get are not from people we know or feel we should trust; less news comes from the first-hand accounts of journalists in the field, but is rather recycled in the blogosphere; previously unnecessary terms such as “real person” have emerged in the field of customer service to describe who we are trying to reach; friends are not “really” friends unless we confirm them on our MySpace or Facebook accounts. Their list goes on with an underlying theme rooted in technology and consumption: namely, contemporary shifts in mediated reality and experience are pushing consumer populations to yearn for authenticity.

For the sociologically mindful, questions quickly emerge from reading their claims. How can the alleged crisis of (in)authenticity be empirically studied, and in what ways are individuals and groups being affected—emotionally, psychologically, socially, spiritually? And perhaps more basically, are the processes they describe really creating “toxic levels” of inauthenticity? How does one measure that toxicity? Or asked differently, how does one distinguish the authentic from the inauthentic, the real from the fake, the genuine from the fraudulent, the true from the false? In order to decide whether such questions can even be answered, we must first ask a more basic question. What is authenticity?

Each of these questions require care in answering, for recent decades have witnessed the growth of a schism in how social scientists understand the very nature of social reality, and thus the nature of authenticity itself. Much of traditional sociology has approached the world from a realist perspective that assumes the obduracy of reality and social facts. Gender, race, and other social phenomena are considered real in the same way a building is real: no matter how you try, you can’t wish one or the other out of existence. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann’s (1967) seminal book, *The Social Construction of Reality*, however, marked a watershed moment in which the underlying assumptions of the realist perspective were called into doubt. Through a precise and sustained critique, they questioned the foundations of the social facts paradigm. Skin color,

for example, which had long been assumed to be an objective marker of a racial identity, came to be seen as infinitely variable. Moreover, it became obvious that through language, socialization, and cognition do we go about placing people into arbitrary racial (and other) categories. Over the last forty years, the social constructionist perspective has gained increasing popularity across many social science disciplines.

The realist-constructionist dichotomy relates directly to both academic and lay assumptions about authenticity. To get a sense of a realist perspective, we need look no further than the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED). There, authenticity is first defined as being “in accordance with *fact*, as being *true in substance*.” Consider recent photo advertisements by two rival vodka makers. Swedish brand Absolut pictures its vodka bottle with a halo above its neck and the description “Absolut perfection” below, while in a competing ad a bottle of Russia’s Stolichnaya vodka (complete with its display of four gold medals) is presented underneath the slogan “Choose authenticity.” Both advertisements promote the sense that their product is authentic vodka, unblemished and true in substance. Of course, the question of whether the Swedes or the Russians make a more authentic vodka remains unanswered. The OED also defines authenticity “as being what it professes *in origin or authorship*; as being *genuine*.” Fighting against an alleged graduate school curriculum that stifles one’s creativity in lieu of procedural rules, Don Jacobs’ (2008) book, *The Authentic Dissertation: Alternative Ways of Knowing, Research, and Representation*, offers “a road map for students who want to make their dissertation more than a series of hoop-jumping machinations that cause them to lose the vitality and meaningfulness of their research.”<sup>1</sup> In this second definition we get the sense that authenticity is rooted in creativity and self-expression rather than in conformity to social forces. A third definition offered by the OED characterizes the authentic as that which is “*real, actual*.” Here the authentic stands against replicas, pretense, and posing—a narrative common in popular culture, as Gilmore and Pine demonstrate in chapter after chapter of their book. What each of these definitions share in common is the reification of authenticity in everyday culture and discourse. Authenticity is to be understood as an inherent quality of some object, person or process. Because it is inherent, it is neither negotiable nor achievable. Authenticity cannot be stripped away, nor can it be appropriated. In short, the object, person or process in question either *is* authentic or is *not*, period.

The ironic part of all this is that contemporary culture industries invest their lifeblood in producing the very authenticity they tell us cannot be manufactured. In his 1997 book, *Creating Country Music*, Richard Peterson dissects decades of popular music as he explores just this issue—the fabrication of authenticity by profit-seekers. Peterson keys us into the modern myth of authenticity, then deconstructs that myth by arguing that authenticity is a socially constructed phenomenon that

1 From the Routledge website: <http://www.routledgeeducation.com/books/The-Authentic-Dissertation-isbn9780415442237>.

shifts across time and space. Peterson’s study is but one of many by sociologists in recent years that critique realist assumptions of authenticity. Yet such work has remained relatively dispersed within sociology until now. Drawing primarily from social constructionism, interpretivism, phenomenology, and symbolic interactionism, the chapters in this book tackle issues such as the experience of authenticity in the context of work and aesthetic production, the construction of authenticity in the formation of collective memory, the value of authenticity in consumer culture, material culture, and music fields, as well as the relation between authenticity and identity, and between insincerity and inauthenticity. Aware and weary of sociology’s realist heritage, the authors collectively advance a balanced and pragmatic vision of the concept of authenticity from a variety of qualitative methodological perspectives.

But the question still remains—what is authenticity. Beyond our belief that authenticity is a socially constructed phenomenon, we recognize that authenticity is “ultimately an evaluative concept, however methodical and value-free many of the methods for establishing it may be” (Van Leeuwen 2001:392). Authenticity may be seen as some sort of ideal, highly valued and sought by individuals and groups as part of the process of becoming. Alternatively, authenticity is often something strategically invoked as a marker of status or method of social control. Authenticity is not so much a state of being as it is the objectification of a process of representation, that is, it refers to a set of qualities that people in a particular time and place have come to agree represent an ideal or exemplar. As culture changes—and with it, tastes, beliefs, values, and practices—so too do definitions of what constitutes the authentic. Authenticity is thus a “moving target” (Peterson 2005:1094). A sociology of authenticity must attend to the socially constructed, evaluative, and mutable character of the concept, as well as its impact on a number of social dimensions. In the remainder of this chapter and the rest of the book, we consider the relevance and significance of authenticity in terms of culture, self, and society. Part 1 focuses on definitional and conceptual issues, on the ontological and epistemological foundations of our interpretivist approach to authenticity, and on authenticity and inauthenticity as values and ideals. Part 2 examines personal authenticity, that is, the authenticity of self and the formation and maintenance of authentic self-concepts, personas, and identities. Finally, Part 3 analyzes authenticity in the context of small groups, subcultures, discourses, and contemporary culture and society at large. In what follows we briefly describe the content and relevance of each chapter and situate it into the background of the relevant literature.

### The Concept, Value, and Ideal of Authenticity

Following this introduction, Alessandro Ferrara begins Chapter 2 by outlining three important denotations of authenticity. Authenticity can refer to a moral identity functioning as a source for normativity, to the impetus of the cultural

movement toward self-realization typical of the twentieth century (see also Lewin and Williams this volume), and the force of example and the ideal and practice of exemplarity. Ferrara dedicates his attention especially to the latter, which he constructs by drawing a philosophical and theoretical cartography of diverse approaches to authenticity. His cartography maps out a terrain of oppositions between substantialist and intersubjective, centered and decentered, integrative and antagonistic, and spontaneity-based versus reflexivity-based approaches to authenticity. Ferrara's own inclination is toward a type of authenticity that is fully reflective, as he finds that a reflective view of authenticity best allows one to tap into the cognitive moment of the relation that the self has with itself, into the self's orientation to knowledge, and the practical moment of commitment to value-based action.

Ferrara's chapter represents an elaboration, clarification, and follow-up to his influential 1998 publication, *Reflective Authenticity*. In that seminal monograph Ferrara brought together numerous and diverse strains of philosophical, psychoanalytical, and sociological thought to bear upon the question of authenticity. Ferrara's vision—in both that book and in this chapter—is to show that the idea and value of authenticity, rather than autonomy, is the quintessential node of modern and Western philosophical thinking. In defending his arguments from critiques and misunderstandings of his earlier work, Ferrara here confirms his view that an approach to self and authenticity based on reflexivity “provide[s] us with ways of thinking of limits to the self-shaping power of the self without either locating these limits outside the self or invoking the dubious notion of an essential self to be true to.”

In Chapter 3 Andrew Weigert reflects on the meaningfulness of personal authenticity. Taking an explicitly interactionist approach Weigert conceptualizes the self as an emergent project, as well as the very creative subject and object of that process. Weigert orients his theoretical attention to the temporal properties of personal authenticity, grounding it into the present from the perspectives of the past and the present and their differing motives and motivational sources. Authenticity is to be found in volitional acts unfolding in problematic situations—and more precisely in those acts which index the self's motivation to feel and act in congruence with personal values. Weigert further extends authenticity into the territory of hope, which he views as central to self-functioning, to meaning formation, and to individual and collective motivation. In doing so Weigert transcends the micro level of the social psychological dynamics of authenticity. For him authenticity connects into wider dialectics of social responsibility, ameliorative reform, and a growing cosmopolitan consciousness.

Weigert's primary reference to the authenticity literature is by way of Viktor Gecas (1986, 1991, 1994, 2000, 2001) who—following the lead of Turner (1976; Turner and Schutte 1981)—emphasized the meaningfulness of authenticity for the self-concept and its interlinking with larger cultural processes. Gecas's key contribution laid in particular in his vision of authenticity as motive and motivating resource that is as essential to the self as the better known self-esteem and self-

efficacy. Gecas argued that authenticity can serve as both motive and motivation (also see Franzese this volume; Vannini and Burgess this volume) since both work equally well as operative knowledge of self by the self and as expressions of the self's sociality and agency. In his writings Gecas also linked authenticity to the culture of modernity and the struggles of both the self and social movements within that period.

Any intelligent reflection on the value of authenticity has to be carried out while keeping in mind the importance of its counterpart: inauthenticity. Inauthenticity is not only inevitable, but, according to Dennis Waskul in Chapter 4, even desirable at times. Inauthenticity, insincerity, or simply the necessity to abandon moral struggles and say “to hell with it!” are common features of everyday life, and even of a good life. To explain this important point Waskul takes the reader through a contrived autoethnographic exploration, a breaching social experiment, and a flight of fancy. As he tries to stay true to himself and others for a full day Waskul finds himself incapacitated by the continuous struggles to define what is authentic and morally honest versus what is inauthentic and socially right. And after angering students, coworkers, and family members with his authentic and sincere ways Waskul concludes that not only is inauthenticity necessary, it is often desirable.

Waskul's chapter eloquently captures the complexity of dramaturgic approaches to the ideal of authenticity. According to Goffman (1959) we wear masks and perform roles for others not because we fancy ourselves thespian-like histrionic characters, but because our expressive action is first and foremost directed at the maintenance of relationships through the saving of face. From a dramaturgic perspective, therefore, the value of authenticity does not reside in choosing a role with which we feel as little distance as possible. Rather, the value of authenticity and inauthenticity lies in being a “more or less person” rather than one's own “true self” all the time. A “more or less person” inevitably exists through concealment and information control. A more or less person is an actor that understands that social life demands secrecy and thus a certain measure of insincerity and inauthenticity. In pointing out how acting honestly is conceptually different from acting sincerely, Waskul highlights how there is virtue in inauthenticity and thus how impression management is not the epitome of inauthenticity but the very root of what it means to be a functional, socialized, integrated, and lovable member of society.

Discussions of authenticity and inauthenticity are legion within the ever-expanding field of cultural studies, and especially within the interdisciplinary subfield of subculture studies. Classic ethnographic accounts of music-based subcultures, countercultures, lifestyle enclaves, scenes, or simply peer groups (e.g. Frith 1981) have shown that concerns with authenticity lie at the roots of group membership, group collective identity and values, personal and social identity formation and maintenance, and status (e.g. Coco and Woodward 2007; Levitt and Hiestand 2004; Moore 2004; Riley and Cahill 2005; Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1990; Williams 2006; Williams and Copes 2005). But aside from the more micro-sociological concerns with authenticity as congruence to group ideology and with the personal authenticity of group members, the very existence of subcultures and

the great diversity of contemporary lifestyle projects of the self bears testament to the widespread preoccupation with individual self-realization, choice, self-expression, and connectedness with like-minded and like-hearted others, typical of late modern culture and society (Ferrara 1999; Holstein and Gubrium 2000; Taylor 1991).

As Lewin and Williams argue in Chapter 5, authenticity is both a moral quest toward the value and practice of self-discovery and an effort to attain identity and stability in the ever-fluctuating and (relatively) anchor-less maelstrom of fleeting trends, panics, and doubts of postmodern society. By de-emphasizing play, irony, pastiche, style, and conspicuous display of taste in subcultures, and by emphasizing instead existential and ideological commitment to a movement's ideals, Lewin and Williams show how the value of authenticity is alive and strong in the punk subcultural scene they studied. To the subculturalists amongst whom they conducted their fieldwork, being authentic stands for being creative, for rejecting the status quo, for the values of self-reflection, self-discovery, originality, and for a concern with deep felt humanity—typical of the Romantic philosophy of the individual (Boyle 2004; Taylor 1991). The value of authenticity, in this case, is by living to “laws of [one’s] own being” and choice (Trilling 1992:73).

### The Experience and Practice of Personal Authenticity

The chapters contained in Part 2 of the book shift away from broad cultural values and ideals and toward the theme of personal authenticity. By personal authenticity we refer to both an individual's experience of authenticity (i.e. “self authenticity”) and to the interpersonal dynamics surrounding the formation and maintenance of authentic social identities and personas. The chapters in this part of the book have two distinguishing characteristics. First, they treat authenticity phenomenologically, that is, as an affective, cognitive, narrative, and self-reflective experience. Second, rather than treating authenticity as a philosophy or normative ideal (see e.g., Golomb 1995), they view authenticity as an individual and collective practice, a project of the self (cf. Giddens 1991), subject to intrapersonal and interpersonal assessment.

In Chapter 6, Alexis Franzese offers a kind of counter-narrative to Waskul's chapter on inauthenticity, providing a substantial amount of empirical evidence to suggest that authenticity does matter. Through analysis of open-ended interview questions Franzese also finds that experiences of authenticity are highly variable across age and gender. And just as importantly, she notes, there are times and situations when people willingly set their quest for authenticity aside. In this sense Franzese's findings echo the conclusions reached by O'Connor (2006), Sloan (2007), Vannini (2006, 2007, 2008), Weigert (1988, 1991), and Wolkomir and Powers (2007) who—in various research sites and working from different perspectives—agree that emotional experiences of authenticity are nuanced,

multi-faceted, complex, and highly dependent on context (cf. Turner and Billings 1991).

Franzese's chapter epitomizes the usefulness of Ralph Turner's (Turner and Schutte 1981) epistemological approach to authenticity. In a seminal contribution dating back almost three decades, Turner and Schutte (1981) argued—setting aside in exemplary fashion concerns with whatever objectively and metaphysically may constitute authenticity—that authenticity is but an affective experience: the experience of feeling congruent to one's sense of true self, or in other words of feeling true to one's ideal self (also see Erickson 1995; Gordon 1989; Harter 2005; Salmela 2005; Schwalbe 1993). For Turner (and for Franzese) it does not matter whether one *is* or *is not* authentic. What matters instead is whether one *feels* that one is being authentic or not. Turner's phenomenological twist on authenticity was ingenious, and his equally simple and elegant methodological approach to the study of authenticity—which consisted of simply asking people how they felt about their experiencing of authenticity and inauthenticity—opened the ground for systematic empirical investigations of authenticity like Franzese's and Vannini's and Burgess's.

In Chapter 7 Vannini and Burgess deal with the thorny issue of motivation. Staying true to their symbolic interactionist affiliation, the authors are careful in their declaration that authenticity motivates behavior. Such a linear relation could be seen to reduce the self and individual behavior to a mere effect of authenticity, to a simple by-product of authenticity as an external, deterministic force. But as Vannini and Burgess argue authenticity is not a causal force or a drive, but instead socialized willpower. Their argument builds upon Gecas's (1986, 1991; also see Weigert this volume) argument that authenticity ought to be seen, similarly to self-esteem and self-efficacy, as a motive and a source of motivation for the self, being as it is nothing but an individual's self-appraisal of one's values and worth as a congruent person. Drawing upon interview data with academics, Vannini and Burgess find that in the context of doing scholarly research the will to act authentically translates into the quest for peak experiences, into appreciation for the value of creativity, and into the power of authenticity as a deeply meaningful aesthetic experience.

The work-related conduct of scholars is a particularly interesting one, and several authors have focused on authenticity and on the related concept of emotional labor to investigate service work by subordinate employees with little or no autonomy (e.g. Hochschild 1983; Erickson and Wharton 1997; Erickson and Ritter 2001). In the words of Turner (1976)—who made a distinction between organization “men” (or institutional selves), and mavericks (or impulsive selves)—scholars would appear to a casual observer to be impulsive selves. But as Vannini and Burgess highlight, academic life is far from being an overly individualistic, impulse-driven quest for intellectual self-fulfillment. Professors rely heavily on the definition of their roles to achieve a sense of authenticity, and even in their quest for aesthetic fulfillment spontaneity is often surrendered in order to produce work that, while satisfactory to the self, is useful and appreciated by significant and generalized

others. Thus, not unlike Fine (1996) who found that authenticity in the context of chefs' work was subject to considerable compromise and negotiation, Vannini and Burgess's study evidences the need to treat authenticity not only as an experience but also as an intersubjective accomplishment shaped by the dominant conventions of a particular social world.

Chapters 6 and 7 present an approach to personal authenticity as self-referential. In Chapter 8, Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein take a fully situational approach to the concept. For them authenticity is more ubiquitous, shared amongst a group of interacting individuals, and dependent on situationally-relevant conditions, expectations, standards, and practices—or what they call the auspices of authenticity. This is because, they suggest, authenticity claims “underpin all assertions of identity, emotion, truth, accuracy, and reliability.” In subverting the traditional distinction made by Trilling (1971) between sincerity (i.e. being true to others) and authenticity (being true to oneself) Gubrium and Holstein de-individualize authenticity, bringing claims to authentic communicative action away from the ego and into the social context where individuals meet their challenges.

Gubrium and Holstein do not deny that at a different level authenticity may be experienced as a self-feeling (though that too, arguably, is subject to an internal dialogue occurring under particular auspices), but their analytical attention is of a different nature. For them authenticity is a form of interactional work: a practical, mundane matter that concerns the construction, exchange, consumption, and interpretation of public claims to genuineness, truth, and self-congruency. Authenticity work is skilful and craft-like, and it does *not* go unnoticed until it is challenged. This is an essential part of their argument as it differs from other sociologists' beliefs that “issues of authenticity most often come into play when authenticity has been put in doubt” (Peterson 2005:1083). Gubrium and Holstein argue, our analytical attention should go to those sites where authenticity is made putatively real through interpretive judgements, accounts, and thus its actual materialization—its coming into being—under situational auspices. Ontologically, from the angle of talk and interaction writ large, it is irrelevant whether at stake is the authenticity of non-reflective objects like wine (cf. Peterson 1997, 2005) or reflective objects like the self, because in both cases authenticity comes to life through interactants' work. Thus, judgements regarding personal authenticity are not the exclusive domain of the ego, but of others as well. When others attempt to determine whether ego is being authentic or not, they do so from a different perspective than ego's, but precisely with the same resources—authenticity's auspices—and through the same kind of work: authenticity work. Sincerity and authenticity, in the end, become two sides of the same coin rather than different concepts.

Very few scholars hitherto have looked at the relation between authenticity and social position (see e.g., Bradamat 2005 in relation to ethnicity, Mason-Schrock 1996 in relation to gender and sexual preference, Reay 2002 in relation to class). Chapter 9 reports and discusses the biographies of Reet and Shine, two African-

American men who grew up in America's racially segregated south. Schwalbe's compelling storytelling and analysis show how “the lives of many men in subordinated groups are characterized by similar struggles to live authentically, without masks worn to please more powerful others.” Reet and Shine, explains Schwalbe, are far from careless, playful roles, or from masks chosen amongst a wide array of choices. Reet and Shine may be personas strategically performed to evoke desired responses from one's audiences and to shield the self from the stigmata of race or failure, but first and foremost they are characters scripted into existence by an ethnic and class majority that typecasts underprivileged Others into subordinate roles. Reet and Shine's quest for authenticity is thus much different from that of the privileged scholars discussed by Vannini and Burgess. For Reet and Shine the quest for authenticity in relation to their desired identity comes with an insurmountable hurdle and a heavy price. The hurdle is racial and class hegemony and the restrictions that such a strong hegemony imposes on the repertoire of identities available to minorities like them. And the price to “choosing” one of the few available identities open to them is the self-destruction afforded by a mask that is personally and socially unbearable in the long run.

Performative and critical approaches to authenticity like Schwalbe's show that in everyday life authenticity can be far from “being in control”—one of the denotations of the Greek word for authenticity, *authentheo* (see Trilling 1971:122). Managing impressions of self on the basis of available scripts—as it is clear from both Schwalbe's and Waskul's chapters—pushes the quest for authenticity well beyond the task of a Machiavellian construction of a credible (to both self and others) front. Performative approaches to authenticity show how the expression of authentic selves is no mere situational choice, but instead action that has to follow “advocated codes of conduct” (Goffman 1963:111). Individuals, according to Auslander (1999:72) “achieve and maintain their effect of authenticity by continuously citing the norms of authenticity,” and those norms are clearly compelling whether the intended effect is sincerity (Miall 1989), consistency (Noy 2004), or simply achieving a “balance between the cultural expectations of an ‘ideal’ performance [and] the constraints of the ‘real’ activity” that one undertakes (Stephenson Shaffer 2004:142).

Concluding Part 2 is Joseph Kotarba's ethnographic account of the role played by music in adult socialization. In his Chapter 10, Kotarba draws upon a postmodern blend of existentialist and phenomenological sociology to discuss the findings of fieldwork conducted amongst middle-aged male and female music fans, and in particular amongst baby boomers. Kotarba views authenticity as a form of work. First and foremost authenticity is an exercise in biography work, that is, in growing and in becoming. As a symbolic interactionist Kotarba views the becoming of self not in idealist terms as some kind of struggle to become what one essentially is meant to be. Rather for Kotarba the self in and of its own is inevitably a process of becoming. Authenticity, he argues, is a characteristic of this process: a form of openness to change and to the endless mutability of self and identity in a changing world and within the context of age-related changes in

social roles. In this sense music becomes the soundtrack to one's life, and both an anchor for an ever-drifting self, as well as a vessel for its life's voyages.

Kotarba's arguments are well situated in a philosophical and theoretical background that is teeming with concepts useful to the student of authenticity. Existential philosophy, phenomenology, and its various iterations within social theory and sociology are perhaps the most quintessential starting points for any approach to authenticity. But instead of starting with Sartre, Nietzsche, or Heidegger, Kotarba begins his sociological and empirical perspective on authenticity with Alfred Schutz. Consciousness is social, reflexive, intentional, purposive—Schutz teaches us—and perhaps most important of all, practical (see also Anton 2001). That practical bent translates into a very pragmatic approach to the search for authenticity, an experience to be seen as a way of adaptation to change and as a strategy of defending the self from the basic threats that change may bring about.

### **The Social Production, Exchange, and Consumption of Authenticity**

Part 3 of the book begins with a theoretical reflection on producing and consuming authenticity. In Chapter 11 Lamla tackles the complex issue of authenticity and the possibility of authentication within the context of contemporary capitalism and consumer culture. Lamla focuses in particular on the dynamics of authenticity claims by outlining four ideal types: a cohesive one based on the co-optation of authenticity; one based on the segmentation and diversification of authenticity; one in which dynamics between culture and the economy are coupled but relatively independent; and a final one in which the economy's dependency on cultural dynamics results in a moralization of the former.

Lamla's reflection on authenticity and consumption are to be read against the background of a large body of literature that has surveyed the (im)possibility of achieving authenticity within the context of capitalist production and consumption. Dating as far back as the classic arguments of critical theorists such as Adorno and Horkheimer, much of this literature is marked by (at best) a strong skepticism toward the idea of the culture industry producing authentic products of any kind. The critical idea underlying such scepticism is simple yet elegant: authenticity is a hook employed either to sell products and services (e.g. Beverland 2005; Rose and Wood 2005), or a hegemonic discourse through which various ideologies are articulated (Bramadat 2005; Charmé 2000; Coupland 2003; Heynen 2006). Critical arguments like Lamla's, however, are undoubtedly more nuanced as they are grounded in meso-domain constructionist analysis, fully at peace with the paradoxes of authenticity claims, and thus more germane to a current of pragmatist thought that conceptualizes claims to the authenticity of products and performances as "social accomplishments" (cf. Fine 2003, 2004; Lu and Fine 1995), and the search for authenticity as a rational and emotional response to life in a world perceived to be deeply inauthentic (Erickson 1994).

In Chapter 12 Guilar and Charman discuss the ideal and practice of authenticity within Canadian Coast Salish cultures. Drawing from their applied fieldwork and from a review of decolonized literatures on aboriginal cultures in Western Canada and North America, the authors argue that indigenous notions of authenticity are connected with collective identity, integrity, and respect of ancient tradition and spirituality. As scholars of communications, Guilar and Charman are well aware that cultural traditions—especially, orally transmitted ones—are founded within creative processes of "invention" (Hanson 1989) and re-invention; processes that generate all forms of social organization. Thus for Guilar and Charman the root of authenticity in Coast Salish society is not to be found in dogmatic observance to foundational myths, but rather in the constant creative elaboration of tradition through culture-forming dialogue and intercultural communication.

As Hanson (1989:890) reminds us, "'Culture' and 'tradition' are anything but stable realities handed down intact from generation to generation," and yet it is primarily from their aura of intergenerational stability and rootedness in past mythology that they gather their authenticity. To suggest that culture and tradition are "invented" should not evoke cynical feelings or a sense of paradox. Aboriginal communities such as the Canadian Coast Salish generate and reproduce cultural values and a sense of history and tradition by way of dialogue, and dialogue is not to be taken as a process of distortion of some pre-existing objective realities that awaits to be told "right." Through dialogue and the passing on of values like authenticity, ideas of tradition "become objectively incorporated into that culture by the very fact of people talking about them and practicing them" (Hanson 1989:898). Guilar and Charman's dialogic, phenomenological, and pragmatist approach to authenticity as "invented" (yet real in its consequences) lore thus escapes the vicious circle of what Derrida might call a metaphysics of presence, that is, an authenticity lying in a supposed historically fixed and essential tradition.

In Chapter 13 Holden and Schrock build on their recent work on the emotional culture of small therapy groups (see Holden and Schrock 2007) to consider the dimension of self-authenticity. Their field work focuses on "Aurora Commons," a communal therapy group founded in order to allow members to live in accord with their deepest senses of self, as well as to help them develop maximum honesty and openness with themselves and others. Aurora Commons clearly epitomizes the therapeutic culture of authenticity typical of pop-psychology and pop-philosophy movements striving for self-fulfillment by way of unbridled self-expressiveness, openness in interpersonal communication, personal growth, and rejection of restricting social conventions. But Holden and Schrock show us a socially constructed reality far from a core insider's perspective where community constitutes an exercise in freeing the self from the shackles of social norms. Quite in contrast, the authors highlight how Aurora Commons's emotional culture is the product of strategic performances and expressive acts governed by rules that specify how members are to recognize something as authentic or not.

Holden and Schrock's work beautifully synthesizes the value of an interpretivist approach to authenticity, that is, to authenticity without a "true self," as Ferrara has

put in Chapter 2. By showing that the precise standards and techniques (cf. Gordon 1989) through which people build a shared agreement over what is to be considered authentic, an interpretivist approach to the production, exchange, and consumption of authenticity conceptualizes authenticity relativistically by envisioning it as an outcome of social interaction, as an emergent product of intrapersonal and interpersonal communication, and as a cultural trait that is indeterminate, fluid, “invented” and shared (and also contested, resisted, and commodified) by social agents acting within concrete everyday-life situations. Rather than reinforcing existing binary understandings which juxtapose authenticity with inauthenticity, or instead of seeking an unchanging or promissory essence of what authenticity is, such interpretivist approaches to authenticity are multidimensional, performative, and often at peace with the seeming contradictions of everyday practice.

Systematic discussions on authenticity have become more common within social psychology and the sociology of culture only in the last fifteen years or so. But the topics of tourists’ experiences of authenticity and inauthenticity, of travel as a quest for the authentic, and of the authenticity of cultural expressions, rituals, and artefacts produced for tourists have been a staple of research and debates in the interdisciplinary field of travel and tourism studies for quite a bit longer (for reviews see Olsen 2003; Reisinger and Steiner 2005; Wang 1999). Explorations of authenticity in this field can hardly come into their own without taking into account MacCannell’s (1973) classic work on the dramaturgy of tourists’ encounters with “natives.” MacCannell’s approach, as forming as it has been, has however undergone the criticism of those who find authenticity to be less rigid of a concept than he did at the time. For example, DeLyser (1999) has convincingly shown how authenticity is not an end result or a premise of travel, but instead a pragmatic vehicle through which visitors and tourism workers engage in narrativization, interaction, and acquaintanceship with one another and the tourist site. Similar emergent and pragmatic approaches are evident in investigations that carefully dissect the nuances of authenticity in relation to the importance of context (e.g. Cohen 2003), who stands to benefit from it (e.g. Barthel-Bouchier 2001), and the discerning abilities of the parties involved (e.g. Gable and Handler 1996; Johnson 2007).

In an equally pragmatic and ecological fashion Chaim Noy, in Chapter 14, conceptualizes authenticity as a semiotic resource (cf. Van Leeuwen 2003) that people practically employ in order to increase the value of discourses, objects, and identities. For Noy, who reports the findings of an ethnographic study at a heritage site in Israel, it is not important to discriminate between what is authentic or inauthentic, but instead to focus on what people do to authenticate what they do or who they are. The outcome of what they do with something defined as authentic is often ideological in nature, with ideology in turn being used as a resource to confer authenticity to related objects and discourses. Authenticity is thus a cyclical process rather than a static characteristic; once constructed it is used to build, or validate, its very own manifestations and performances.

In Chapter 15 McCarthy examines memorializing practices mediated by news and infotainment channels as dramatic performances of authenticity. These performances, she notes, are displays of an emotional intensity very powerful and yet remarkably fleeting and ephemeral. This, according to McCarthy, constitutes a uniquely paradoxical postmodern spectacle of real artifice, of deeply felt manipulation, and of a kind of drama whose foundations are built on an old emotional history and yet reassembled on state-of-the-art technocultural possibilities. But in the end, it is not all fake or empty. However fleeting they may be, authenticity experiences remain rhetorically powerful emotional performances.

To appreciate the complexity of McCarthy’s work one has to be mindful of Bruner’s (1994) important contribution to the study of authenticity. Openly critical of postmodernist approaches that write out both the pragmatic relevance and the historical rootedness of authenticity in performative practices, Bruner embraces—rather than dismisses—the contradictions evoked by “authentic reproductions” (p. 398) such as the Lincoln commemorative tourist site in New Salem, Illinois. Authentic reproductions derive their authenticity from practice, rather than ideal, and from different meanings of the expression “authentic.” As oxymoronic as it may sound, authentic reproductions of myths that were perhaps never true—such as theme park-like historic sites, or the dramatic spectacles of the social imaginary that McCarthy analyzes—directly construct meaning in several ways. Gary Krug considers the darker side of this analytical insight in chapter sixteen. Focusing on the political and cultural consequences of counter-narratives surrounding 9/11, Krug embraces a postmodernist stance *vis-à-vis* the new forms of mass-mediated social control unleashed by George W. Bush’s conservative administration. Caught between positions of “fact” and “fairy” (Latour 2004), citizens live out their media-rich lives with little in the way of legitimate narratives that run counter to the official story as disseminated by the White House. Asking, “are there no more unanswered questions, no credible dissenting voices? Has closure been achieved?”, Krug’s study of authenticity is distinctively critical. In his conceptualization, authenticity becomes both pawn and king on the chessboard: quickly sacrificed in certain moments, yet ultimately important for those determined to win the game.

Bruner (1994) and McCarthy (Chapter 15) both get at how people gather some sense of past and contemporary history, however superficial, from spectacles, how they build and celebrate a sense of *communitas*, how they play with “time frames and enjoy the encounters” (Bruner 1994:398), how they consume nostalgia and the pathos of authenticity, and how they situate themselves into broader notions of progress and fraternity. Krug (Chapter 16) on the other hand leaves the reader less content with the whole idea of cultural consumption. In other words, McCarthy shows how people make authenticity meaningful, while Krug suggests ways in which the powerful might empty authenticity of meaning altogether.

These final ideas are a key feature of what sets *Authenticity in Culture, Self and Society* apart from the plethora of philosophical and economic books on the market today that have “authenticity” in their titles. It is precisely an interest in studying how authenticity is made meaningful, rather than a quest for finding the meaning

of authenticity, that characterizes all of the chapters found herein. Our hope is that the reader will take away a more pragmatic, interpretivist understanding of authenticity, seeing it not as something that exists as an inherent property of some social object, but as part of a process of interaction and experience in everyday life.

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