CORE VALUES AMONG NEWFOUNDLAND FISHERMEN IN THE 1960s

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Abstract: In this article the core values of fishermen on the South Coast of Newfoundland in the 1960's are compared with those of a farming/fishing population from the Blasket Islands off western Ireland from a generation earlier in time. The data from which the values are derived consists partly of autobiographical materials, but mainly was obtained through projective narrative tests based on those developed by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961). The author finds a considerable congruence between the two populations, both in respect of the five values which were the basis of the Kluckhohn study, but also in respect of three others which have emerged in his own work.

Résumé: Dans cet article on compare les sentiments fondamentals des pêcheurs de la côte méridionale de la Terre Nouvelle dans les années soixantes par rapport à ceux d'une population des cultivateurs et des pêcheurs d'une genération d'auparavant qui habitait les Iles de Blasket au large de L'Irlande occidentale. Les données dont ces sentiments sont dérivés consistent en partie des matières autobiographiques, mais on y a obtenu la plupart par les tests projectifs sous forme de récit qu'on a façonné d'après Kluckhohn et Strodtbeck (1961). L'auteur a trouvé un congruence considérable entre les deux populations et à l'égard des cinq sentiments qui se faisaient le base de l'étude de Kluckhohn et à l'égard des trois autres qui se sont développés de son propre travail.

Over 25 years ago Florence Kluckhohn and her associates completed a pioneer study of the values of five neighbouring ethnic groups in the American southwest (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck 1961). In this analysis they isolated five problem areas which they believed are common to all human groups, and referred to a sixth in a footnote, although they did not include this in their analysis. In a recent study of the fishermen/farmers of the (now abandoned) Irish island community of Great Blasket (Whitaker 1986) I have attempted to resurrect Kluckhohn's schema, using as my principal data the extraordinary autobiographies that were written by no less than four different members of that community, as well as the published letters of a fifth islander. This exercise had been in my mind for some thirty years, since I had first visited those islands, which form the westernmost outlier of Europe, in 1954. I increas-

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ingly believed that this fine corpus of material might offer an alternative way to examine values from that employed by Kluckhohn and her team, who devised anecdotal objective (projective) tests, incorporating descriptions of social situations, on which they asked their informants to comment. However, the Blasket Islands are probably unique in anthropological experience for the sheer quantity and quality of the "personal documents" provided by the subjects in a totally voluntary and generally unrehearsed manner.

When I first arrived in Newfoundland in 1959 I resolved to undertake a further study in the same tradition. However, there was only a minimum body of Newfoundland autobiographies, and, although one cannot claim that the Blasket authors were "typical" members of their society, it was immediately apparent that the few Newfoundlanders who had written their life histories were quite exceptional. One must therefore at once question whether the values of such writers were possibly quite different from those of the majority of their fellow-citizens. Preliminary inquiries erroneously suggested to me that only a few rural Newfoundlanders at that time had such oratorical skills that they could spontaneously, and without prompting, verbalise their life experiences in such a way as to permit a listener from outside the society to extract specific statements illustrating the subject's fundamental values. It therefore became clear to me that I would have to resort to objective tests of the type prepared by Kluckhohn, which were made available to me prior to the publication of the work. She, however, had the advantage of being concerned with American ethnic minorities which were generally well documented already, so that the preparation of such narratives required rather less prior contact with the community before the projective test was compiled. Pilot studies were in fact completed in that project.

I had arrived in Newfoundland as perhaps only the second behavioural scientist ever to be interested in investigating the traditional culture, and especially the values, of that isolated former colony—Britain's "oldest"—and prior ethnography was non-existent. In these circumstances I was obliged to depend on the advice of the neophyte sociology and anthropology students whom I was teaching at Memorial University of Newfoundland. However, there was one considerable "plus" which most anthropologists do not have: namely the fact that Newfoundlanders were totally English speaking, and at that time considered themselves to be culturally part of the British imperial population. In their education British textbooks had been used. The colony had joined Canada in an unusual way some ten years before, but the economic effects of this change were only just beginning to manifest themselves. Few Newfoundland women had left the island, whilst the only time their menfolk had been abroad was during the two World Wars, in the second of which Newfoundland provided a Forestry Corps as well as other soldiers, and also as fishermen making casual visits to mainland ports whilst fishing. A

number of Newfoundlanders had visited the Caribbean, following the ancient economic pattern of trading dried cod for rum and sugar. It may be presumed that all these encounters with the outside world were, with the exception of wartime residence abroad, too brief for any fundamental changes to occur in their pattern of value-orientations. At the end of the 1950s television was only beginning to encroach upon the consciousness of the population of Newfoundland, so that if I chose to work in some of the more isolated areas, I would be in contact with informants relatively unaffected by this all-pervasive medium. Radio was a more familiar experience at that time, and would doubtless have to be taken into account; however I early discovered that it was the local private transmitters that formed the major sources of information, and such stations, of which one was dominant, were run by Newfoundlanders, who might be expected to share many of the traditional values. The CBC, which elsewhere in Canada was followed by a significant section of the population, was less influential outside the provincial capital, St. John's.

I therefore determined to visit different communities along the South Coast of Newfoundland, inhabited solely by persons deriving a livelihood from the sea, and not at that time linked by road, either with each other, or with any other part of Newfoundland.[1] This population had not long before been the subject of a special government enquiry, the South Coast Commission, which had isolated the special problems of the region, although nobody had essayed to describe the social characteristics of this population.

Farley Mowat, who lived in the South Coast outport Messers Cove from 1962 to 1967, has described the situation of this population at that time:

> They are an Antaean people, adamantine, indomitable, and profoundly certain of themselves. They are a natural people who have not lost, as we have lost, consciousness of unity with the natural world around them. They are an extraordinarily conscious people imbued with an exceptional sensitivity toward each other. They are a people who accept hardship and who, from the crucible of their endurance, had created the conditions requisite to human happiness. They are supremely effective human beings; and they are among the last inhabitants of this planet who still appear—or until recently appeared—to possess the answer to that nagging question, "Who, and what, am I?"
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> But this was an illusion. In distinctly envisaging these people's lives as they had been, we failed to glimpse the heart of darkness beating black within the present hour. Their lives had undergone a sinister sea-change. We had not long been about our task when we began to recognize the change, and began to understand that our account was being transmuted, without our volition, into a requiem. We who had come to chronicle human life in its most admirable guise remained to witness and record the passing of a people. (Mowat & de Visser 1968 unpaginated)

Assisted by one or two students, then not even half-trained as social scientists, I travelled slowly along the coast—the only public transport were two Canadian National steamers that went in each direction once a week, on a journey that took five days, calling in at many of these isolated settlements, known in the vernacular as "outports." Preparing narratives in advance was far from easy. Narratives had to be systematic. They had to present familiar situations to which an informant might respond with some empathy. Informants might then discuss them in such a way that their own values might be elicited. I decided early on that I would confine the exercise to mature males who were involved in regular fishing, since I believed (as it turned out, correctly) that these individuals might more easily exhibit some rapport with the chief investigator, then a man in his early thirties, who had arrived recently from Scotland. I attempted to distance myself from the stereotypical government officials who were beginning to appear on the scene. I was accompanied from time to time by rather young male students who came from the area, but whom I suspected might be treated by their fellow South Coastmen as either deviant, or at any rate too ambitious, because they had left the community for at least four years to pursue a university education. (In point of fact several of these people had been away from their home communities at high school, and therefore their own local rapport rested primarily on kin-ties; they were often themselves somewhat estranged from the life-style, and the accompanying values, of the communities in which they were raised.) This difficulty, of which I quickly became aware, was not however amenable to any immediate rectification, and in the absence of any preexisting sociological literature dealing with Newfoundland, I early realised that my study would remain liable to criticism on this account. Field anthropologists—and I had myself already worked for some four years in three other cultures[2]—can seldom be methodological purists, and confronted with a situation where they wish to record a rapidly vanishing way of life they have often to accept some deficiencies in their procedures, even though this will expose them to subsequent criticism by armchair commentators.

I decided to continue with my project, in spite of the difficulties over research personnel and the more serious inadequacy of full preparation of projective test material. I have long delayed publication as I had hoped to obtain further field data. Such an aspiration is no longer feasible, however, since modernization and resettlement have changed the social situation totally. Nevertheless the favourable reception of preprints of my Blasket materials convinces me that there is still academic interest in the study of traditional values. Regretfully, we have virtually stood still in this theoretical area in the intervening period, and have not been systematically developing new methods or classifications. In the meantime, however, Newfoundland has, in an anthropological sense, become arguably the best-documented prov-

ince of Canada.[3] I can therefore now supplement my observations with direct quotations from the local population which, I believe, can throw light on the underlying values of Newfoundland fishermen in the 1960s. A few of these citations come from the Great Northern Peninsula, a region culturally similar, which shared the isolation and absence of roads until the 1960s. The only significant difference between the two areas is the limited farming that supplements the fisheries of the more northerly fishermen. For the South Coast we are fortunate in having the descriptive work of one of Canada's foremost writers and his wife.[4]

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It will be recalled that Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck gave no special priority among their five core values (the adjective is mine). There is in fact some interrelationship between these, but none was attributed ascendancy over the others. Among seafarers, however, it might be argued that there is some primacy attached to the question of the Man/Nature relationship, since this is especially germane to the maritime lifestyle. The question is formulated: "What is the relation of Man to Nature (Supernature)?" There are three potential responses: Man is subjugated to Nature; Man must have a Harmonious relation with Nature; and Man has Mastery over Nature. In my study of the Blasket Islanders (as also elsewhere—Whitaker 1976:374) I have suggested that the sea is the least predictable and controllable of the elements, and that those who derive their living from it are inevitably and frequently reminded of their relative helplessness in many marine situations. The uncertainty of fishing, which combines all the unpredictability of the hunt with the frequent additional determinant of a variable price-system for their fish, brought about by market forces over which they have no control, leaves the participants with a great sense of powerlessness. The Blasket people certainly all accepted that Man is subordinate to Nature.

In the narrative material which I employed, there were several situations described where the informants might comment on the forces operating to determine their livelihood. In the great majority of responses (87%) there is an unequivocal assertion that it is outside human ability either to control the catch or to achieve an equitable market price. "The Almighty" will determine whether the fish may be caught, and an over-eager fisherman may be brought to heel by the visitation of storm or other adversity. Although it is conceded that modern inventions in marine technology may help the fisherman in some degree—and few of my informants had much understanding of such developments at that time—nevertheless the fishes' movements are determined by a natural, or more probably supernatural, force which it would be both wrong and foolish to question. Indeed, a clearly fatalistic philosophy underlies this value, and the range of human initiatives is believed to be

clearly circumscribed. If Man persists in developing techniques to extract more fish than the Deity might wish, the fish themselves might be taken away, elsewhere in the ocean beyond Man's knowledge, and thus human striving would be effectively thwarted. Those people who did not provide a response that one could immediately define as an assertion of Man's subordination to Nature, instead made some comment suggesting coexistence between Man and Nature, that might be coded as representing a Man/Nature Harmony, although I should perhaps stress that I never obtained a response which included the word "harmony" itself. No individual said anything that might be interpreted as suggesting that Man has Mastery over Nature. Mowat expresses this value well:

> For those who live by it and upon it, the sea is the ultimate reality in their existence. They accept it as their master, for they know they will never master it. The sea is there. It is their life: it gives them life and sometimes, in its moments of fury, it gives them death. They do not struggle against its imponderable strength, nor do they stand in braggart's opposition to its powers.
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> "Ah, me son," a schooner skipper told me once, "We don't be takin' nothin' from the sea. We sneaks up on what we wants—and wiggles it away." (Mowat & de Visser 1968 unpaginated)

A second value-orientation identified by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck is encapsulated in the response to the question "What is the character of innate Human Nature?" They identified three basic responses, Evil, a mixture of Good-and-Evil, and Good, and each of these may be qualified as mutable or immutable. In my examination of the Blasket material, I found fourteen out of fifteen statements recovered from the autobiographical texts reflecting the middle category Good-and-Evil, which might seem to contain some concept of change. A single statement from Blasket suggested immutability, and this also applied to a mixed categorization of Human Nature. It is to be remembered that the Blasket Islanders, like the great majority of citizens of the Republic of Ireland are Roman Catholic, with a high degree of daily religious observance at the domestic level. The South Coast fishermen of Newfoundland are predominantly Anglican, with an inclination towards the "Low Church" end of the churchmanship spectrum. However this variation between the two populations in respect of religious adherence is not reflected in any difference in the responses of the fishermen, who on the South Coast all accepted that Human Nature cannot be categorized in absolute terms, nor can it be seen to be unchanging. The religious doctrine of the potential redemption of Man through the saving activity of the Holy Spirit was once specifically asserted in the consideration of the projective material which was used to introduce these discussions. Whereas Catholicism sees such redemption as achieved through the sacraments, the variety of Anglicanism practiced on the South Coast is more open about how this might be obtained. In record-

ing this comment, however, I must stress that theological explanations of the type here advanced will not be volunteered by the vast majority of Newfoundland fishermen from the South Coast. Perhaps in other areas, where there is a strong tradition of Nonconformity, and numbers of unordained local preachers, the discussion of this point might be pursued in a more theological vein. In the only attempt I made to replicate the South Coast values study in Newfoundland, which was in Notre Dame Bay, an area now strongly United Church—the successor to the British Nonconformist tradition—I did get more argumentative discussion in this style but my data are too sparse to permit me to assert that this was characteristic of all United Church regions of the island.

A third, and perhaps the most interesting, value-orientation, is provided in response to the question "What is the temporal focus of Human Life?" The three logical alternatives are *Past, Present,* and *Future*. Here, as among islanders from southwestern Ireland, the data obtained are mixed. The *Past orientation,* in which in particular the old social order is mourned, and praised as superior to the *Present,* seemed to be general among informants over 55 years of age. It was often verbalized in comparisons between the old order represented by pre-Confederation Newfoundland, especially in narratives about Newfoundland before the economic collapse in the early 1930s led to the abrogation of Newfoundland's status as a separate Dominion—followed between 1933 and 1949 by direct (colonial) rule from London under what was uniquely named "Commission of Government"—and the new role of Newfoundland as the tenth province of Canada. However I should stress that my survey was undertaken before the full economic benefits of joining the Canadian Confederation might have become clear. Younger males were still optimistic that substantial change would occur in the future, and therefore they would provide responses that might be so coded. This raises the intriguing possibility that the time value-orientation is itself susceptible to change in the course of an individual's life-cycle.

This value might be linked to the now less fashionable sociological distinction between *Deferred Gratification* patterns, and *Immediate Gratification* activity. Of course such labels must be used with care, since any individual might have episodes of behaviour in which the goal is *Immediate Gratification,* as when he engages in sex without any expectation of procreation, or when he drinks enough to be inebriated. Many individuals who might be capital accumulators, putting money aside in the hope that it increases, or deferring the pleasures of high life for a hard grind as a university student (in the nowadays mistaken expectation that this will lead to higher future remuneration), may still engage in purely gratificatory sex, or get blind drunk. These labels must be attached to some general mode of behaviour rather than to each single human activity. Male Newfoundlanders

certainly have a traditional pattern of sexual and bucolic indulgence that might belie the assertion of *Future time-orientation,* and paradoxically it is the young—who are most *Future-oriented*—who exhibit such behaviour most frequently. I believe that this is probably equally true in the cultures studied by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, and I would therefore suggest that much more work needs to be done on the problem of the apparent lack of congruence between asserted ideals and actual behaviour. (I should also record that a few informants delivered responses which could be labelled *Present,* and also that there was marked discrepancy between the coding schedules covering these, showing that individuals might interpret the same statements quite differently. Unfortunately my data are insufficient to examine this point further.)

A fourth value-orientation is indicated in response to the question "What is the modality of human activity?", to which Kluckhohn and her associates identify three alternatives, labelled somewhat awkwardly *Being, Being-in-Becoming,* and *Doing.* Whereas in the *Being* orientation the individual prefers activity perceived to be intrinsic to the human personality, in the *Being-in-Becoming* orientation the idea of development is paramount. The *Doing* orientation, so familiar to much of American society, stresses activity resulting in accomplishments measurable by standards external to the individuals concerned. The *Doing* orientation seemed to dominate much of the responses, although again in the case of older men it was less marked, many bemoaning that physical decline prevented their preferred activity level being attained. The obligation to be active was well expressed by Angus Bennett of Daniel's Harbour on the Great Northern Peninsula: "A man doesn't need to be hungry very often around here if he's willing to work" (Green 1974:8). I had anticipated that Catholic/Protestant differences might be exhibited here, and that the former might display the *Being* response more frequently. However my sample did not permit such an assertion to be tested. It is noteworthy that in my analysis of the Blasket authors' data, all three responses were represented, although the *Being* orientation was most numerous. However in that study one must be aware that generalizations were derived from only five authors.

The final orientation analysed in *Variations in Value-orientations* relates to the question "What is the modality of man's relationship to other men?", and has a range of three responses: *Lineality, Collaterality,* and *Individualism.* The Lineal principle stresses continuity of the group through time, and ordered positional succession. This is characteristic of many of the responses I received, although I was particularly dissatisfied with the projective material that was prepared for assessing this category. The distinction between *Lineality* and *Collaterality* is not easily made in considering a bilateral society not organized into distinctive kin-groups. As a result there was also some disagreement between the coders who were given the task of reducing the

collected statements, usually recorded on tape, into these three categories. However it must be stated that the *Individualistic* response, although present, was rare.[5] Newfoundlanders in general, and the South Coast people in particular, have experienced long years of poverty and even hunger, to which they have responded by adopting a pattern of mutual aid which is the antithesis of Individualism. The more cynical commentator would add that this has prepared Newfoundlanders to cash in on the Welfare State. The strong sense of obligation to share is shown in the marked hospitality that characterizes the isolated communities. Thus Bruce Roberts of Woody Point, Bonne Bay (at the base of the Great Northern Peninsula) said:

> You'd knock on any door, and they'd sing out and say, "come in!" There wasn't any strangers in those times. And mostly you didn't knock at all, but lifted the latch and walked into the kitchen, and took a seat on the settle. . . . No matter where it was along the whole coast, it was jest like walkin' into your own home. (Taylor & Horwood 1976:8)

In the Blasket corpus all three orientations were represented, although the Individualistic response was confined to one author. Kluckhohn and her team discuss in a footnote (1961:10n.) a sixth universal human problem: Man's conception of space and his place in it.

In my Blasket study I have interpreted this as including Man's relationship to the Environment, and his commitment to the Local Community. As in the case of the Blasket Islanders, the South Coastmen conceived of the sea as inhospitable and dangerous, only to be encountered because one's livelihood is derived from it. The terrestrial environment, however, is seen to possess great beauty, and this is particularly true of the local community from which the individual hails. At the time of my study the extensive relocation program had not made much progress on the South Coast, but the potential threat was being raised, and this gave rise to almost eulogistic statements which defined the home locality.

The degree of this sentiment across Newfoundland is documented in Ralph Mathews' fine study of the problems brought about by that program, *There's no better place than here* (1976). One informant from the community he names "Mountain Cove" in Bonne Bay at the base of the Great Northern Peninsula said: "I'd sooner be here than anywhere else in the world" (Mathews 1976:63). Angus Bennett who lived somewhat to the north on the same peninsula said: "Lived here all my life at Daniel's Harbour, Sir, and I couldn't of asked the Good Lord for anything better" (Green 1974:8). A young girl from Burgeo on the South Coast also expressed this strong identification with place:

> The worstest thing I know is that we got to go away. I watches the gulls following the boats out there and I wish I was a gull sometimes, because nobody makes them go away from where they belongs. Those gulls are some lucky! They can stay and live in Burgeo until they dies. It won't be very long before they's nobody here except the gulls at all. (Mowat & de Visser 1968 unpaginated)

An outsider like myself, confronted with the harshness of the South Coast, as well as the isolation, might be excused the fleeting thought that such local pride and rivalry was at times a little overdone, were it not that this is replicated in many communities on the fringes of the North Atlantic, including such remote places as northwestern Iceland and the Hebridean Islands. Yet curiously such places provide the reservoir from which emigrants to the New World have emerged over many generations. I would therefore suggest that this dimension also requires considerable further study.

This is true of my seventh and eighth value-orientations, which I have developed independently of Kluckhohn and her associates in my study of Great Blasket. These concern the relations between people of different generations, or of different gender. I have posited the questions "What is the appropriate modality between human generations?" and "What is the modality of human gender relationships?" In the former category we must recognize some potential overlap with the question concerning Time-orientation. On the matter of gender, my data are distinctly skewed, since my sample is exclusively male. At the time I undertook this study there was a clear rivalry emerging between the different age cohorts, and also an apparently long term one between the two sexes. This latter had perhaps been present in Newfoundland society since it was first colonized, but, again, this assertion requires a more intensive analysis of available ethnohistorical materials. However my data show that these orientations are relevant, and I hope that in future their analysis will be undertaken.

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In this article I have been motivated by two aspirations, one relating to maritime societies of which Newfoundland now provides one of the better documented examples, and another of general theoretical significance to anthropology. I have been led to resurrect some old field data that I had not published before. I am aware of its deficiencies, both in respect to the number of informants—29 in all, and not all of these completely tested—but even more in respect of the projective instrument that was used, prepared in all too great haste. The passage of time since it was collected would now permit a longitudinal study of changes in value-orientations following relative modernization.

We also need cross-cultural comparative analysis of value-orientations among different fishing communities. My own work has led me across the various island groups around the North Atlantic littoral. I have often asserted in discussions that fishermen in Norway, Scotland, Ireland, Iceland, and Atlantic Canada have more in common with each other than they have with the urban populations of the nation-states that they inhabit. But as long as such assertions rest on the subjective impressions of anthropologists, rather than on objective, quantified data, the anthropologist will still be liable to be labelled a woolly-minded romantic. Certainly there is a general congruence between the depiction of the values of the fishermen of the Great Blasket off western Ireland, and those of Newfoundland.

In conclusion, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck must be seen as significant pioneers, although all too few have followed them into the substantive area they sought to illuminate. Their book is irritating in its methodological complexity, but their isolation of five universal value-orientations is, I believe, still of analytical value. Three other value-orientations have been here delineated, one of which they anticipated.[6]

Notes

1. The preliminary fieldwork on the South Coast in 1960 was financed by a grant from the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council; other interviews were conducted under the auspices of the Institute of Social and Economic Research at Memorial University of Newfoundland, of which I was a co-founder, in the period 1961-63.
2. My prior fieldwork included somewhat under two years among reindeer herding Sámi (Lapps) in Northern Scandinavia and Finland, 1950-54; two years in crofting communities in northern Scotland especially in the Outer Hebrides and the northern islands (Orkney and Shetland), 1952-59; and field visits to Albanophone shepherds in Montenegro, the Kosmet and Western Macedonia 1953-54.
3. The only published anthropological monograph on a South Coast community, (Chiaramonte 1970) deals with François, there named "Deep Harbour."
4. Farley Mowat lived in Messers cove near Burgeo from 1962-67. This community is sympathetically described in a thinly fictional account by his wife Claire Mowat (1983), and the area also is the locus of Mowat's less friendly treatment in his account of the killing of a rare Fin Whale (1972). Another, more easterly, community on that coast is François, which is the main scene of the five photographs by de Visser, with elegaic text by Mowat (Mowat & de Visser 1968). The illustrations in particular depict the harshness of the life of fishermen on that coast.
5. Chiaramonte, working in François in 1962-63, also employed derivatives of Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's schedules to study values (independently of myself). I have not seen that material, which is largely unpublished. However it must be recorded that his findings, which are briefly reported in a transactional analysis (Chiaramonte 1970:69-61), markedly differ from my own. He emphasizes the high value placed on individualism, but also recognizes "an expression of collaterality." François certainly seems exceptional in downplaying sibling obligations, and the differences in our conclusions may possibly be due to some aberrance in the values held in that community. However Chiaramonte follows Barth's transactional mode which renders comparison of our

materials somewhat more difficult. A knowledge of these differences has contributed to my hesitation in presenting my own material.

6. This paper was first presented to a symposium on "small-scale fisheries" at the 1985 annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association. I am indebted to the positive critique of colleagues at that session. I must also acknowledge the generous leave policy of Simon Fraser University.

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