SECTION I: THEORIZING EXTENDED CASES

PREFACE

Theorizing the Extended-Case Study Method

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The essays composing this section vary in their purport and approach, but nonetheless address in common a number of questions that cut across at least any two of the essays, thus exhibiting what Wittgenstein spoke of as family resemblance for the lot. These include the question of dualism, of the relation between the micro and macro realms of social life, of the differences among the variants of the Manchester case method, of the determination of the boundaries of a case, of the part played by conflict theory in the development of the extended-case method, of the importance of the creative or emergent moment in the unfolding of a case, of the nature of the logic involved in analyzing a case, and, above all, of the intimate connection between the social-scientific turn to process and the creation of the extended-case method.

It is only fitting that this section focuses on analyses inspired by Gluckman's 1961 essay, "Ethnographic Data in British Social Anthropology." This essay, and that of Mitchell, discussed in the following paragraph, together demonstrate the profound epistemological shifts through the study of ethnographic practice that were entailed by Manchester anthropology. Gluckman's essay documents how, in British social anthropology, the (Malinowskian) emphasis on intensive field research conditioned the ethnographic redirection from custom and morphology to "the total process of social life" and the need to rethink how to use ethnographic case material. Though this essay might have been the focus of the volume's historical contributions, for present purposes its theoretical force and implications are worth featuring and give a *primus inter pares* face to the family resemblance that these theoretical essays present. In prescribing a shift of case usage, from the method of 'apt illustration' to that of the 'extended case', the essay elucidates that this change of ethnographical method makes critical common cause with the implicit promise of a grand theoretical swing toward, in our terms, practice. It is remarkable to see, in an article first published at the front end of the second half of the twentieth century, the mainstay anthropological concepts—culture, society, structure, matriliney, agnation, and so on—already being overtly thrown open to

doubt on the basis of a theoretical orientation, processualism, with which, in many ways, social science is still trying to come to terms.

Gluckman raises but does not closely tackle the question of what good sense it can make to generalize from a particular case to the social whole. The anthropologist/sociologist Clyde Mitchell, a close associate of Gluckman, who played a major role in the development of the extended-case method (as well as network analysis), takes up this epistemological question in his essay "Case and Situation Analysis." In an analytically rich, rigorous, and incisive discussion, he observes that the question takes its force from the misleading presumption that if the generalization from the case study is to be sound, the case must be deemed to have been typical of the social order. Mitchell points out that this presumption is fundamentally misleading, for, unlike statistical inference, the emphasis in the case study is not on whether a characteristic of a particular case (say, the distribution of age) is representative of that characteristic in the population as a whole, but rather on the nature of the connection between different characteristics (say, between age and the probability of being married), a connection that demands theoretical explication. In effect, Mitchell is arguing that justification of extrapolation from case studies is a matter not of typicality but rather of the production and assessment of theoretical propositions about the way things hang together.

The shift toward process makes more than an epistemological question, though, for it also implicitly presupposes an ontological reassessment of the very nature of the social. Two of the essays presented here, by Glaeser and by Evens, directly confront the question of ontology qua ontology. Glaeser, a sociologist with a keen professional interest in ethnography, sets out the makings of an ontology suitable to understanding social life in terms of process. The result is distinguished by its comprehensive scope and systematic conceptual exposition. The immediate object of his ontological exercise is to facilitate translating a theoretical interest, bearing on one or another social process, into a fitting, concrete ethnographic project. Glaeser's problem, then, is correlative to Mitchell's of the relevance of particular cases to sociological generalization—but rendered, in Glaeser's argument, as how to go about, in light of processualism, profitably selecting one's ethnographic site and case material. By blurring the boundaries between one social phenomenon and another, and by describing social life as open-ended, processualism complicates this problem anew.

In his exercise, Evens is basically concerned to extract the processual implications of situational analysis for social ontology. He argues that Cartesian dualism constitutes the ontological scaffolding for structural functionalism and that it is for reasons of this taken-for-granted ontology that Gluckman found it so difficult to seize fully the advantage of his awareness of the fundamental importance of process and break cleanly with structural functionalism. Evens's tack is, like Glaeser's, to recommend an ontology that grasps in processualist terms what there is. He does so by drawing on certain notions in Heidegger's phenomenological philosophy. By defining being and the world as no less part and parcel of as distinct from each other, Heidegger's famous notion of 'being there' (*Dasein*) or 'being in the world' essentially displaces dualism. In addition, because being obtains thus only as a tensile phenomenon (always between what it is and what it is not),

Heidegger's notion implicitly redefines being as process in the sense of becoming. Evens further observes that 'being in the world' is another way of talking about humans as innately 'situated', by which he means that they are constrained but that, paradoxically, the set of constraints always includes the constraint to act and react creatively and reflexively in the face of the basically open-ended character of social existence. From this gloss on the idea of 'situation' (implicit in 'situational analysis'), Evens is urging that in the accounting of social processes, anthropology needs always to bear in mind, in addition to causality and motivational elements, this singular and defining human condition of creative response, a condition that ontologically describes human social existence in terms of responsibility and in this sense as, at bottom, an ethical reality.

Handelman's contribution, though also focused on the aleatory nature of situated existence, takes a somewhat different tack altogether, arguing that extended casework amounts to 'micro-historical' research. In his 1961 essay, Gluckman specifically eschews the idea that, in studying particular cases in their extension, one is doing history. However, given that in construing situational analysis as history Handelman means to bring to the theoretical fore the innate temporality of extended cases, and that it is unlikely that in his comment about history Gluckman had in mind the technical notion of micro history, the founder of the Manchester School might well have been open to Handelman's usage. Using Goffman's concept of the encounter, Handelman keys his argument to interaction. His main point, though, is that the extended-case method can show how practice is practiced into existence, and, correlatively, since practice is open-ended, how extended cases constitute what he calls 'prospective' (in contra-distinction to 'retrospective') history: one simply cannot know what will happen next and just how the case will inform the macro realm of institutions.

Finally, Kapferer presents an exceptionally rich, intimate, and comprehensive account of Manchester anthropology in connection with the development of the case study. His discussion of Gluckman's anticipation of so much that is now anthropologically current is particularly valuable, not only for its scrutiny of the Manchester School's theoretical framework and tradition but also, in view of the too often thoughtless presentism characterizing major trends in today's anthropology, for the discipline in general. Kapferer, who as a novice anthropologist enjoyed an appointment at the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute of Social Studies in British Central Africa at a time when the prolific research of that institute had been powerfully informed by Gluckman's directorship, brings out just how strongly political the anthropologists associated with the Manchester School were and how this political disposition gave critical impetus to the resulting anthropology. In this connection, Kapferer is inclined to see Gluckman's abiding interest in conflict as a programmatic component of the extended-case method rather than a tacitly impelling force toward its creation. But Kapferer is by no means wholly uncritical of the tradition and finds that there is room to build on the Manchester edifice. Hence, in a concluding discussion that aims to run between radical relativism and a kind of universalism, he argues that Gluckman was, for all his innovation, insufficiently open to the discursive practices characterizing the cases he studied and was therefore unable to allow these to inform his own discursive perspective of how the social works.