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From the Iron Cage to Everyday Life

JABER F. GUBRIUM

ERVING GOFFMAN (1983) ARGUED FORCEFULLY that human relations transpire in a domain of their own, with diverse subjectivities, sentiments, and strategies for action. The domain is influenced by personality and social structure, but it is not determined by them. Positioned at the public margins of inner life, personality presents itself, in Goffman’s (1959) view, as a function of judgments strategically communicated in sites of interaction. Situated outside of inner life, structures such as governments and institutions are in continuous need of local articulation in what Dorothy Smith terms the experience-near “relations of ruling” (Smith 1987). Influential images and ideas of what these structures are and intend play out in the contingencies of practice. Uneasy with experience-distant perspectives, Goffman (1983) called the domain the “interaction order,” which is the relational context central to the concerns of this book.

In an era of hyperindividualism, it is easily forgotten that we experience life in relationships. From the relations of family living and schooling to the relations of work and retirement and the relations of sickness and care, relationships deploy ways of being and prompt directions for action. Relationships are ever present in life, mediating identities as much in the flow of interaction as in the personal monitoring of thought and feeling. Relational worlds and relational sequences—first parental, then educational, and later occupational—provide life with substance and patterning, giving shape to experience through time and space. While some would claim that individual identity is a fundamental presence in life, in practice, who and
what we are are socially constructed, with manifold identities being formed in the process (Mead 1934).

Increasingly prevalent today is the organized service relationship. It is the kind of relationship that leads the way in turning troubles into problems and discerning pathways for intervention and recovery (Gubrium and Järvinen 2014). The service relationship is professionally mixed and institutionally diverse. It varies from the relations of doctoring, nursing, and physical therapy to the relations of counseling, social service, and personal assistance. The relationship is as wide-ranging in context as the differences between solo practice and corporate management. More and more, it is a relationship that is mixed in its values, as the logic of administrative accountability and efficiency operates alongside the logics of service and care (Gill 2012; and see Jensen and Villadsen, Chapter 11, this volume). As Everett Hughes pointed out decades ago, contemporary experience, especially its troubles, is being drawn through and rendered actionable by a sundry world of “going concerns” (Hughes 1984 [1937]).

This book deals with that relationship as it functions in the interaction between service providers and service users. It is concerned with state and institutional policies as far as they bear on the ordinary practice of that relationship. It does not feature a specific sector such as doctoring, nursing, or social work but rather approaches the service relationship as a social form in its own right, opening its borders, actors, and logics to critical scrutiny and reconsideration. While individual chapters have points of departure in particular national contexts and organizational venues, all proceed with an eye toward recognizing the fluid complexity of the service relationship and, on that basis, what it can mean to provide and receive just and humane service and care for all concerned across the board.

**IMAGE OF THE IRON CAGE**

Forever lurking around the service relationship is a troubling image of organizations, official insiders, and their connection with outsiders that Max Weber nearly a century ago likened to an iron cage. The image persists to this day and is quietly ominous in the chapters of this book, even while organization theory is now highly variegated in its metaphorical bearings (Alvesson 2012; Gabriel 2000; Gubrium and Holstein 2001; Hatch 2012; Morgan 1985; Reed and Hughes 1992; Silverman 1970). The image depicts rigid rules of interaction, an unsparing application of official responsibility, and a sharp demarcation of the separateness of outsiders and the transparency of their circumstances. Weber focused on the inner borders of officialdom, while his literary contemporary Franz Kafka portrayed the borders of access for outsiders.

As administrative imperatives increasingly influence the service relationship, it is instructive in this introductory chapter to begin with Weber’s and Kafka’s portrayals. Noteworthy is the dismal future they foresee for the relationship. This calls on us to imagine something different but invisible in what Weber and Kafka wrote about. In what follows, I deliberately dwell on pertinent texts of theirs as a way of communicating their portrayals’ deeply emotional contours—what it feels like on all sides to be caught in the web of the iron cage—which continues to raise hackles, resentment, and calls for action.

**Inner Borders**

Weber was distressed by the increasing rationalization of contemporary life, the ideal form of which he described as bureaucratically organized. He viewed modernity as rooted in the rationalization process. In his book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1985 [1930]), Weber drew linkages between the ascetic ethic of Puritanism, capitalist accumulation, and modern organization. Guided spiritually by tenets designed to achieve maximum efficiency, unbridled accumulation, and ultimately salvation, the actors Weber envisioned fashioned rules of rational production, which informed and bound the very actions that produced them, generating his infamous iron cage. If Weber’s prose was characteristically neutral and systematic, the metaphor he applied accompanies enduring anguish over what he sought to understand.

Maximally efficient rationality is concisely described in Weber’s principles of bureaucracy. He sharpens the description by contrasting it with what he idealizes as a premodern form of social organization. Modern capitalist organization’s ironclad and global inevitability is compared nostalgically with a long-lost form of moral order capable of “throw[ing] aside [such confining encumbrances] at any moment like a light cloak.”
When [Puritan] asceticism was carried out of monastic cells into everyday life, and began to dominate worldly morality, it did its part in building the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order. This order is now bound to the technical and economic conditions of machine production which to-day determine the lives of all the individuals who are born into this mechanism, not only those directly concerned with economic acquisition, with irresistible force. . . . [Rather than being able to throw this aside at any moment like a light cloak], fate decreed that the cloak should become an iron cage. (Weber 1946:181)

This appears to be the only place in Weber’s voluminous writing where he used the iron-cage metaphor. If seeming to be a passing trope, it nonetheless has become standard usage for principles of organization that Weber simultaneously figured to be pernicious.

The principles are presented in a section of his book *Economy and Society* (1968 [1922]) titled “Characteristics of Modern Bureaucracy.” The first of Weber’s six principles is the “principle of official jurisdictional areas” (Weber 1968:956). Fixed rules govern the range of official activities. Weber explains that “the authority to give the commands required for the discharge of [official] duties is distributed in a stable way and is strictly delimited by rules concerning the coercive means, physical, sacerdotal, or otherwise, which may be placed at the disposal of officials” (p. 956).

Weber’s second principle is the “principle of office hierarchy and of channels of appeal [that] stipulate a clearly established system of super- and subordination in which there is a supervision of the lower offices by the higher ones” (p. 957). This applies to all modern bureaucracies, both private and public. Control and accountability are top-down, not bottom-up, in other words.

The third principle refers to “the management of the modern office, [which] is based upon written documents (the ‘files’), which are preserved in their original or draft form, and upon a staff of subaltern officials and scribes of all sorts” (p. 957). The modern office is not governed by random application of rules, nor does it abide discretion, but instead operates in terms of written and stable guidelines.

The fourth principle deals with the education of officials, which “usually presupposes thorough training in a field of specialization” (p. 958). Official posts are not filled helter-skelter from an available labor market but draw from pertinent expertise, again regardless of whether the bureaucracy is private or public.

Fifth is the principle of “full working capacity” (p. 958). This refers, in the first instance, to the full on the job separation of the public and private lives of occupants. In the second instance, the principle rests on the understanding that the maximum efficiency of modern bureaucracy stems from work time that is purely engaged with organizational, not personal, goals and commitments.

And, finally, Weber’s sixth principle is “the management of the office follows general rules, which are more or less stable, more or less exhaustive, and which can be learned” (p. 958). The rules apply regardless of circumstances. Ideally, there is no room for compromise, only straightforward execution.

According to Weber, the principles are exhaustive and are applicable without exception; deviation hampers maximum efficiency. Practice is subject to principle, in other words, not the other way around. The concept of frontline discretion, eloquently described by Michael Lipsky (1980) in his book *Street-Level Bureaucracy*, would be a form of border disruption tantamount to a violation of assigned authority and designated hierarchy. There is no indication that the modern relationship Weber portrays could be otherwise in his idealized scheme of things, such that practice instead is foundational, and principle is applied locally and strategically for everyday purposes.

Oddly enough, the first to express frustration and a desire for something different—a reimagining, if you will—was Weber himself. He lamented principles that turned officials into mere cogs of efficient organization, whirling with disenchantment away from traditional values such as trust, care, collaboration, and gratitude, losing touch with people’s basic humanity. Referencing J. P. Mayer (1943), biographer Reinhard Bendix (1968) quotes Weber berating the bureaucrat, a role that the chapters of this book show is more complex in practice than Weber could (or would dare to) imagine (see Barnes, Chapter 15, this volume).

It is horrible to think that the world could one day be filled with nothing but those little cogs, little men clinging to little jobs and striving towards bigger ones—a state of affairs which is to be seen once more, as in the Egyptian records, playing an ever-increasing part in the spirit of our present
administrative system, and especially of its offspring, the students. This passion for bureaucracy... is enough to drive one to despair. It is as if in politics... we were deliberately to become men who need "order" and nothing but order, who become nervous and cowardly if for one moment this order wavers, and helpless if they are torn away from their total incorporation in it. (Bendix 1960:464)

Borders of Access

Franz Kafka's novels The Trial (1925) and The Castle (1929 [1916]) are stark portrayals of the borders of access to the iron cage. While Kafka did not use the metaphor, he featured outsiders trapped by its consequences. Unlike Weber's formal prose, which reflects his bureaucratic principles, Kafka's own writing—like his outsider—meanders with resignation from one off-putting circumstance to another. I will use The Castle to identify parallels, but in Kafka's case implicit, principles of outsidership.

Featured in the novel is the protagonist K, the outsider who has been summoned by castle officials to do a land survey. A key symbol is the Castle Inn, which is frequented by officials, not "rustics" and other villagers. The latter frequent the distant Bridge Inn, which K stumbles on late one night in the dead of winter when he arrives in the village. The portrait is hardened by villagers who have little sense of what officials do, or the reason for the castle's governance over village affairs. They could care less and are strangely complicit in sustaining the local order of things. Except for K. He is a stranger to the village and, to a fault, dutifully seeks access to the castle to learn the details of his assignment. Failing with frontline officials and even with those who ostensibly have castle connections, K is determined to contact Klaamm, the arbiter of castle affairs. The villagers naturally resent this. As K persists, his relations with villagers sour and his chance engagement with girlfriend Frieda disintegrates.

Exemplary excerpts offer the basis for identifying principles of action on this side of the divide. The first excerpt is taken from the novel's opening pages and bearkens a principle of exclusion and respect. Soon after K arrives at the Bridge Inn and falls asleep from exhaustion, he is awakened by the landlord and the son of the castle warden. The following annotated exchange transpires. WS is the warden's son, who bristles at the idea that K is crossing a line, the principle of which, like Weber's rules, is applicable regardless of circumstances.

**WS** [To K] This village belongs to the castle, so anyone who stays or spends the night here is, so to speak, staying or spending the night at the castle. And no one's allowed to do that without a permit from the count. However, you don't have any such permit, or at least you haven't shown one.

**K** [Grunglingly sitting up] What village have I come to then? Is there a castle in these parts?

**WS** There most certainly is. Count West's castle.

**K** And I need this permit to spend the night here?

**WS** [Derisively] Yes, you need a permit. [Turning to the landlord and other guests] Or am I wrong? Doesn't he need a permit?

**K** [Yawning] Well, I'll have to go and get a permit, then.

**WS** Oh yes! Who from?

**K** Why, from the count. I suppose there's nothing else for it.

**WS** [Shouting] What, go and get a permit from the count himself at midnight?

**K** [Unruffled] Is that impossible? If so, why did you wake me up?

**WS** [Beside himself] The manners of a vagrant! I demand respect for the count's authority! I woke you up to tell you that you must leave the count's land immediately. (Kafka 1929:5–6)

The next excerpt depicts a second principle and is taken from Chapter 9, titled "Opposition to Questioning." The principle is the ultimate truth of bureaucratic files and records. The principle designates that what is written in official documents should be taken to be more credible than the events and experiences they describe. In the presence of the Bridge Inn's landlord (L), who is growing increasingly impatient with K's behavior, K asks a castle representative, Mr. Secretary (MS), about the need to complete records in order to get an interview with Klaamm.

**K** However, now, Mr. Secretary, I'll ask you to tell me whether the landlord is right. I mean in saying that the records you want me to help you complete could result in my getting an interview with Klaamm. If that is the case, then I'm prepared to answer all your questions at once. Yes, if it comes down to that I'm ready for anything.

**MS** No, there's no such connection. My business is only to get a precise account of this afternoon's events down on paper for Klaamm's village registry. The account is drawn up already, there are just two or three gaps I want you to fill to make sure it's all in order. There was no other purpose, nor can any other purpose be achieved.
A third principle is the acceptance of miscommunication. The border of miscommunication is one-way only. Since officials are experts, all communication from them is correct. Mistakes derive from how communication is interpreted on the other side of the border among those who receive it. In the case of human services, this means the users. This is portrayed at the start of Chapter 10 of The Castle in an encounter K has with Barnabas (B), a minor official who has been uncommonly understanding of K’s circumstances. Barnabas at first seems to be bringing good news, but soon K complains of a miscommunication, which, incidentally, Weber on the other hand idealizes as perfect communication because it comes from experts.

9 [Greeting K] Yes, indeed I was coming to find you with a letter from Klamm.

x [Overjoyed] A letter from Klamm! [Reading the letter] “To the Land Surveyor at the Bridge Inn. I appreciate the surveys you have carried out so far. The work of your assistants is praiseworthy too; you know how to keep them busy. Do not desist from your zealous labors! Bring the work to a happy conclusion. Any interruption would be irksome to me. Furthermore, rest assured that the matter of your remuneration will be decided very soon. I am keeping an eye on you.” [K turns to Barnabas] This is a misunderstanding. [Holding the letter in Barnabas’s face] See what the gentleman says to me. The gentleman has been misinformed. I have not carried out any surveys, and you can see for yourself what my assistants are worth. I clearly can’t interrupt work that I am not doing. I can’t even be irksome to the gentleman, so how could I have earned his appreciation. And I feel I can never rest assured of anything.

2 I’ll go and pass that message on. (Kafka 1925:105-106)

A fourth principle deals with outsiders’ responses to what they take to be miscommunication. Curiously enough, outsiders are not simply puppets in the scheme of things. They do have agency, but it is a form of agency set against crossing borders. The underlying principle here is the freedom to wait. Desperate, late one evening K attempts to meet the elusive Klamm at the Castle Inn. Earlier in the novel, K had seen what appeared to be Klamm there. But, try as he might, K encounters yet another minor official, who after several exchanges with K just disappears, leaving his sleigh driver behind. Ignoring K, the driver goes about his business, putting away the horse and the sleigh. But K insistently stays put, and Kafka writes:

It seemed to K as if all contact with him [the driver] had been cut, and he was more of a free agent than ever. He could wait here, in a place usually forbidden to him, as long as he liked, and he also felt as if he had won that freedom with more effort than most people could manage to make, and no one could touch him or drive him away, why, they hardly had a right even to address him. But at the same time—and this feeling was at least as strong—he felt as if there was nothing more meaningless and more desperate than this freedom, this waiting, this invulnerability. (Kafka 1925:95)

The fifth and final principle of outsidership relates to desperation. It offers a happy ending of sorts, one that keeps officials safely ensnared on one side of the divide and villagers and K optimistically anxious on the other side. That principle is the gift of hope—hope for understanding, hope for involvement, and hope for resolution. Following an earlier altercation with the Bridge Inn landlady and Mr. Secretary, K admits to being wrong about his view of official due process, for which he apologizes. The following patronizing exchange with the landlady ensues:

k If that’s the case, madam, then I must apologize to you, and I’ve misunderstood you, for I thought, mistakenly as it now turns out, I had gathered from your earlier remarks that there was in fact some kind of hope for me, however small.

l Exactly, just as I was saying. You’re twisting my words again, only this time in the opposite direction. [As explaining to a child] In my view such a hope for you does exist, and it is indeed to be found solely in these records. But it is not the case that you can simply ask Mr. Secretary aggressively, “If I answer your questions, can I see Klamm?” If a child says something like that we laugh at it; if an adult does so, it is an insult to Klamm’s office, and the secretary kindly covered up for the insult with the elegance of his reply. However, the hope I mean lies in the fact that through the records you have, or perhaps you may have, a kind of connection with Klamm. Isn’t that hope enough? If you were asked what merits you possess to make you worthy of the gift of such hope, could you come up with the slightest thing? To be sure, nothing more precise can be said about that hope. (Kafka 1925:101–102)
TRENDS AT THE BORDERS

Decades later, debate in the late 1960s and 1970s about future trends at the borders of the service relationship dealt with ideas that would come to challenge Weberian and Kafkasque principles. One trend related to limits on the scope of professional expertise and autonomy that accompany the increasing availability of expert knowledge in society at large. The other trend related to the condition and scope of control on the user side of the service relationship, particularly the degree to which nonprofessional involvement in service provision can be accommodated.

Scope of Professional Expertise and Autonomy

Marie Haug's (1972a) skeptical foresight is palpable in debates about the first trend. Haug's recollection of the issues targets what she calls "syrupy ideas about the future" (Haug 1988:49). In the 1960s, social scientists such as Daniel Bell (1968) and Eliot Friedson (1971) had argued that following the postwar growth of scientific knowledge of all kinds and the related expansion of expertise, the future would be dominated and guided by professionals. The claim rested on professionals' long training, expert knowledge, cultivated objectivity, and selfless service. Sounding Weberian without the morbid undertones, the argument perpetuated an avalanche of celebration. It is worth quoting Haug for a description of this felicitous, if not self-serving, perspective:

We will live, it is said, in a "post-industrial" society. This means, according to Bell (1968, p. 152), that the professional and technical class will be pre-eminent or, in more general terms, that it will be a "professionalized society" (Friedson 1971, p. 467). ... Another related prediction suggests that the service echo of the professional's style of work is becoming generalized to the total society. In this view, the imputed ideology of the personal service profession—"concern, sympathy and even affection for those who are to be helped by the professional practitioners"—will structure the social order along the ethical lines espoused by the counsellor (Halmos 1970, p. 14). (Haug 1972:195)

Haug recalls a distinct wariness about the celebratory view, expressed as early as 1964 by Harold Wilensky (see Wilensky 1964), but to little effect:

Wilensky was reacting to claims such as that of Nelson Foote (1954), who argued that even blue-collar workers were becoming professionals. We have forgotten how widespread the enthusiasm was for this idea, which had the golden glow of wiping out status differences. ... Not every occupation, [Wilensky] argued, could be successful in struggling to gain "extraordinary autonomy." ... [Still], seven years after [Wilensky's] paper was published, Eliot Friedson (1971), in the editorial foreword to a special issue of the American Behavioral Scientist, forecast a "professionalized society." ... Meanwhile, Paul Halmos (1970) in Britain was predicting that the service ethos of the professions would be generalized to society as a whole. (Haug 1988:48–49)

The celebrants clearly had the human service professions in mind. Against the felicity, and hedging her own prognostication with the word "hypothesis," Haug proposed what she called "an alternate hypothesis for the future" (Haug 1972:195). She hypothesized that in the future we would see the depersonalization of the traditional professions. She did not mean that expertise and educated skill would disappear but instead that professionals' work as organizationally unencumbered and exclusive experts would change, drawing nonprofessionals across the borders of expertise. As Glen Randall and Darlene Kindlak echo in recent reflections on social work as a profession, "Marie Haug depicted a process of depersonalization in which a profession's monopoly control over a body of specialized knowledge becomes challenged" (Randall and Kindlak 2008:14). This has resulted in "an increasingly educated public demanding greater accountability of professionals" (p. 344). This hypothesis continues to occupy researchers today (see Dent, O'Neill, and Bagley 1999; Friedson 2001; Harrison and Pollitt 1994; Scott et al. 2000).

Haug also pointed to the changing role of the clients of professionals, the outsiders she called the "missing ingredient" in discussions of the professions and professionalization. This missing ingredient, discussed further in the next section of this chapter, is now making itself felt in many ways, from user advocacy groups to policy agendas that consumerize clienthood. Another missing ingredient Haug identified was the impact of technological change, which has made service knowledge databases widely available. And yet another ingredient, one that is now overwhelming in its influence, is that professional practice in many service sectors is taking place within organizations, inserting managerial accountability into the
professional autonomy equation. The era of solo practice in medicine, for example, is virtually over, displaced on many fronts by the corporatization of health care. The question now is whether what lies ahead will come full circle and become an all-consuming, "colonized" iron cage, unwittingly drawing its borders around everyone (see Habermas 1984, 1987).

Porous as the borders of expertise have become, there still are legal limits to its application. If expert knowledge is increasingly widespread, not everyone is free to apply its technology. Hanging on's proverbial professional shingle is still shielded by law. Professional jurisdictional disputes notwithstanding (see Abbott 1988), professionals have the privilege of "professing" because they have a legal basis for carrying out activities that others cannot, such as prescribing medication and making welfare service decisions. This line of demarcation has shifted somewhat over the years but remains remarkably tenacious in defining the borders of professionalism and, relatedly, designating who is and who is not expertly professional in service provision.

Human Rights, User Involvement, and User Control

The other trend at the borders of the service relationship deals with the question of who has the mandate to define what is proper conduct or normal in matters such as health and illness, social services, criminality, and disability (Hughes 1958). This is an issue broader than licensure and ultimately deals with human rights. Putting it in Hughes's terms, the question is who has the right to tell society "what is good and right for the individual and for society at large?" (Hughes 1958:79). Now more than ever, it is on this moral and political basis that border crossings are being advocated and undertaken by nonprofessionals, the outsiders whose resources and circumstances Kafka portrayed at their worst.

In contrast to licensure, the good and the right are of general concern, extending to all of society. Taking as a premise that professional knowledge and action have both credentialed and moral bearings, Haug (1972) noted that the moral component is accessible to those without formal training, extending to all relationships. Through their long and intimate acquaintance with ailments and caregiving, patients, parents, children, families, friends, and significant others could be just as knowledgeable as the professionals, and as intimately acquainted with what is good and right in matters of service and care.

Experiential knowledge, it has been argued, has moral bearings of its own (Polanyi 1958; Douglas 1970; Borkman 1976; Pollner 1987). It is a categorically distinct form of knowledge, not subordinate to scientific knowledge. Discussed later in relation to troubles and problems, it is a particularizing form of knowledge, inexorably full of ambiguity (see in this volume Järvinen, Chapter 3; Foley and Timonen, Chapter 6), novelty (see in this volume Carr, Chapter 4; Jones and Villadsen, Chapter 11), and interpretive agency (see Schön 1983; Alm Andreasen, Chapter 2, this volume). Its working sensibilities flow in a different direction than the generalizing acumen of scientific knowledge.

While Haug foresaw the diffusion of expert knowledge and predicted a consequent decline in professionals' status, she did not anticipate the incorporation of experiential knowledge into policymaking and implementation. She certainly did not foresee the growth of a science of everyday life that stood side by side with the conventional sciences of conduct (Pollner 1987; Holstein and Gubrium 2000; Gubrium and Järvinen 2004). What has come to be called "user involvement" keys into this, incorporating knowledge that moves well beyond the formal boundaries of professional expertise (Alm Andreasen 2008; Barnes, Newman, and Sullivan 2007). It extends, for example, to the lay teaching of professionals as ingredients of educational programs and in-house training (see Eriksson and Jacobsson, Chapter 15, this volume), to the involvement of clients and patients in research as co-investigators (Faulkner and Thomas 2002; Trivedi and Wykes 2002; Gubrium and Harper 2003), to expert patients providing peer support in layperson-led educational programs (Edgar 2005; Taylor and Bury 2007; see also Shakespeare and Collins, Chapter 13, this volume), to the professional support of clients' relational citizenship (see Miller and Kontos, Chapter 8, this volume), to client control of personal assistance (see Solvang, Chapter 7, this volume), and to the control and ambivalence of the terminally ill over their remaining life (see Foley and Timonen, Chapter 6, this volume).

This resonates in the persuasive rhetoric of self-help, in demands from laypersons and various user movements for the incorporation of experiential knowledge into service planning and service provision (see Alm
Andreasen, Chapter 2, this volume). It is argued, for example, that only organizations that share the control of service provision with those who have personal experience with disabilities, chronic illness, or mental health problems have a legitimate right to advise and speak on behalf of users (see Solvang, Chapter 7, this volume). Such movements can be stridently opposed to professionals and philanthropic associations that presume to give voice to the experiences and needs of patients and clients, which is taken to be patronizing. The movements combine support to members in nurturing fellowships of equals, and undertake extensive advocacy for equal opportunities in society, for self-determination, political influence, and the right to speak for oneself (McLean 2010; Rose and Lucas 2007; Shakespeare 1993).

For example, Disabled Peoples International, an international umbrella for organizations of disabled individuals, established in 1981, adopted the slogan “Vox Nostra” (our own voice) to underscore this message. Terms for the roles of clients and patients are replaced by the terms “users” or “consumers.” The active agency of the user designation and citizenship are emphasized, which is meant to convey that the disabled are not passive and helpless recipients dependent on the expertise of the professionals but instead are interested stakeholders in care and are able to understand their problems and needs. The idea of user participation supports the goal of moving the relations of ruling in a more symmetrical direction (Drake 1991; Beresford and Campbell 1994).

General terms of reference for the receivers of human services are in flux. The meaning of clienthood has rapidly changed (Hall et al. 2003), and existing claims about citizenization are being challenged (Gubrium and Jarvisen 2014). The concepts of service user and consumer, for example, are not unanimously accepted. Terms such as “consumer” and “customer,” for instance, are not accepted by some, because they are applied by neoliberal advocates of human service reorientation, some of whom aim to dismantle the welfare state. Conversely, the term “user” has been introduced to communicate the altered position of patients and clients vis-à-vis professionals. This designation can imply a rejection of neoliberal concepts such as “customer,” which connotes a market relationship. At the same time, the concept of user also is criticized by disability activists for being stigmatizing, because it foregrounds the master status of dependency for those with impairments. The term “citizen” has been suggested as being more egalitar-

ian (see Miller and Kontos, Chapter 8, this volume). Others believe such terms place too much power in the hands of those who are dependent, helpless, or otherwise unable to participate in service intervention. It is claimed that these terms place too much choice in the hands of those incapable of making choices, such as young children (see Pösö, Chapter 9, this volume) and frail elderly (see Grenier and Flood, Chapter 10, this volume).

New professional roles complicate the issue of user involvement and control by bringing different forms of professional alliances into the mix. Dan Goodley (2011) distinguishes two models of professional involvement: professionals allied with professionals and professionals allied with the community. Inspired by disability activist Vic Finkelstein, Goodley views alliances with the community as preferable (see Grenier, Chapter 14, this volume). In that model, every professional accepts as a starting point the premise that disabled people can have satisfying lifestyles. Cure and physical rehabilitation are not the default goals. What Goodley calls the “virgin field” of professionals allied with the community “demands professionals to invest less time in pathological views of impairment and more in challenging the conditions of disabling” (Goodley 2011:174). A similar perspective is put forth by occupational therapy researcher Karen Hammell, who calls for reforming the field of rehabilitation with inspiration from disability studies. In her view, even if relevant for some people with injuries, professional work in rehabilitation is not about teaching mobility and self-care per se but about “enabling people to get on with their lives” and to “reconstruct their biographies” (Hammell 2006:124).

An important aspect of Goodley’s comparison is the models’ organizational implications, only one of which—professionals allied with the community—entails significant border crossing. A telling example is drawn from professional interventions for deafness. The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) is critical of audiologists who orient toward cures with hearing aids. The group believes audiologists want to replace sign language with an incomplete technology, making deaf people second-rate hearing subjects instead of first-class communicators in sign language. One political outcome is that only certain groups of professionals are welcomed at WFD’s world congresses. The presentation of papers is largely from the social sciences and linguistic studies, and the majority of participants are the clients (deaf people). The professionals working at the conference are
the interpreters, a role drawn from the understanding that, first and foremost, deafness is a culturally significant difference, not a handicap (Solvang and Hauanland 2014).

A more radical form of user control is represented by the Independent Living (IL) movement. Informed by a view of the pernicious impact of professionals’ interpretation of disability, IL rejects the utility of professional expertise. The key principles of IL are summarized by rehabilitation scholar Gerben de Jong in his influential 1979 article (reprinted in 1983 and 2007) in which the IL approach to service production is contrasted with a rehabilitation model. According to de Jong, the locus of the problem is not an incapacity but dependence, inadequate support, and barriers in the environment. Hence, the solutions are located not in the professional interventions of a therapist but in peer support, self-help, the removal of barriers, and antidiscrimination efforts. One practical outcome of this approach is making it possible for disabled persons to hire their own personal assistants. This is seen as a "main presupposition for user control and for freeing disabled people from their reliance on welfare professionals and unpaid carers" (Askheim 2003:217). Advocates of this direct payment strategy de-emphasize competence in health care and social work as qualifications for hiring assistants.

Whether the view is inclusive but wary of professionals or altogether rejects professional expertise, the impact on the human service relationship can be significant. General policy decisions are increasingly affected by user voices and actions (see in this volume Carr, Chapter 4; Garrow, Chapter 5). The shape of professional and service user encounters is evolving as never before; neither the scope of professionalism nor the purview of user advocacy is likely to dissipate in this landscape. The category of service provider itself is broadening to include the professional input of amazingly diverse perspectives and skills, bringing the humanities and the arts, for example, into the mix as never before (see in this volume Miller and Kontos, Chapter 8; Solvang, Chapter 7).

**Everyday Logics of Troubles and Problems**

Trends are historical; they develop through time. In contrast, like everyday life in general, the relational work of service and care cuts across history and forms through practice. Relational work has been present as long as social relations have existed, which returns us to where we began, to the interaction order and specifically to everyday logics of troubles and problems.

Two seminal texts bring into microscopic view the logics' naturally occurring complexity. One is Robert Emerson and Sheldon Messinger’s (1977) article “The Micro-Politics of Trouble.” The other is Michael Lipsky’s (1980) book *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services*. Their purview is everyday life, the discretionary practices of which Weber’s idealization of bureaucratic rationality dismisses as exterminating circumstances and Kafka’s depiction of outsidership treats as incidental to borders of separation. Emerson and Messinger’s angle is interactional and poses *what* and *how* questions: what are everyday troubles, and how do they relate in practice to the construction of serviceable problems? Lipsky’s angle is institutional and poses a *where* question: where is social policy and, to use Emerson and Messinger’s terms, how does that relate to everyday logics of troubles and problems?

Emerson and Messinger’s article is now about four decades old. It endures because it affirms the fruitfulness of distinguishing the logic of troubles from the logic of problems and, most importantly, places them on equal footing in what they call the "micro-politics" of representation. Both troubles and problems operate in the context of everyday life, whether that is the everyday life of professional or nonprofessional practice. While perhaps differentially visible, the logics inexorably and continually work together in practice. This stands in contrast to critics such as Weber a century ago and especially Jürgen Habermas (1984, 1987) today, who would argue that in contemporary life, the logic of problems increasingly "colonizes" the logic of troubles. I will return to this and the issue of differential visibility at the close of the chapter, because it relates directly to the goal of this book.

**The Logic of Troubles**

Emerson and Messinger begin their article by suggesting that we frequently overlook the fact that whether what ails or otherwise bothers us eventually becomes, say, psychological, medical, or criminal, it was once something less well formulated—a trouble, not a problem. At the time Emerson and Messinger wrote, the highly normative term "deviance" was being
used for social problems in sociology, eliciting the reflectivity of troubles and problems:

Our argument assumes that any social setting generates a number of evanescent, ambiguous difficulties that may ultimately be—but are not immediately—identified as "deviant." In many instances what is first recognized is a vague sense of "something wrong"—some "problem" or "trouble." ... This [article] will explore the processes whereby troubles are identified, defined, responded to, and sometimes transformed into a recognized form of deviance. (Emerson and Messinger 1977:121)

VAGUENESS AND NOTICING

Inspiration for their argument appears immediately in the article. We are introduced to the idea that there are troublesome experiences with an everyday logic that is distinct from, and that does not automatically lead to, the logic of problems. The experiences are only "sometimes transformed" into problems. As the word "evanescent" would have it, matters of concern in the logic of troubles are fleeting, not as settled or as clear-cut as in the logic of problems. This is because troubles are experienced in relation to the particulars of local contingencies such as who in particular is troubled, when the troubles arise, other troubles that are pertinent, time constraints, what besides the troubles is at stake in the matter, and what the troubles' immediate or long-term consequences might be, among endlessly provisional matters. Troubles' key characteristic—vagueness—refers to something seemingly wrong or untoward, but it is not clear what that is, how it is so, or what to do about it in the face of its contingencies. It is troubles' everyday "it depends" quality that generates vagueness, a sort of tentativeness with shaky boundaries.

The authors instruct with familiar examples. If the designation of problems begins with formal procedures such as psychological testing, medical diagnosis, or adjudication, the onset of troubles starts with noticing that something is wrong. Noticing is the parallel process to the formal procedures by which experiences are identified in the logic of problems. Troubles come in many forms, from the troubles of bodies, behaviors, and minds to troubled relationships and groups. The authors explain:

The perception of "something wrong" is often vague at the outset: a woman notices that she is gaining weight, or that she is frequently depressed; a hus-

band realizes that his wife is drinking more than usual, or is beginning to stay out later after work; parents see their daughter getting overly interested in boys, or their son starting to hang out with a tough gang of friends. (Emerson and Messinger 1977:121–122)

Noticings do not necessarily lead to professional consultation or formal assessment. A husband or a wife may notice something wrong with a family member but keep it to himself or herself and do nothing about it since doing something may create more trouble than it is worth (an everyday contingency). Or each may share it with the other and leave it at that (a contingent horizon). They might mention it to the subject of what is noticed. They may or may not bring it to others' attention (other contingent horizons). They might even dismiss and ignore the apparent trouble as being insignificant and nothing to fuss about in the face of other concerns in the larger scheme of things (both contingent contexts). The important difference between the logic of troubles and the logic of problems on this front is that, linked as problems now are to chains of formally organized activation rules, problems lead to relatively predictable outcomes, at least in theory. Troubles, in contrast, are not driven by predesignated activities and formal missions but rather by ongoing interpretations of reality—of "something wrong" and what that might mean in the unfolding scheme of things and immediate skien of contingencies.

It is important to note that neither type of logic is exclusive to either outsiders or insiders, but instead they are different ways of making meaning, of knowing, and of acting that are taken up on all sides of the service divide. The idea that the logic of troubles is the representational bailiwick of service users and that the logic of problems is the representational preserve of professionals is not warranted empirically. While Emerson and Messinger's examples might suggest otherwise, just as the logic of problems can assert itself in the lives of users, the logic of troubles extends to and inserts itself into the professional activities of service providers (see in this volume Barnes, Chapter 15; Grenier and Flood, Chapter 16). Unhindered by demands of formality and expertise, the logic of troubles coexists enduringly and inexorably with the logic of problems across service provision. The principles and sentiments of the freedom to wait and the gift of hope described by Kafka extend in their own fashion to the Castle and its denizens, which Kafka's focus on outsiders fails to recognize. The everyday lives
of insiders (and professionals) are as saturated by the vagueness and nothings of troubles, both their own and those of users, as they are beholden to the logic of clearly seeing, and seeing to, the problems over which they have formal oversight.

The Logic of Problems

In contemporary society, it is the ostensible gaze and related application of professional expertise that officially and "logically" transforms troubles into problems. The gaze can be, and often is, adopted by users, but this can be threatening to expertise and largely goes unrecognized or is formally discounted.

CLARITY AND PROBLEMATIZATION

If a key feature of troubles is vagueness, its counterpart in the logic of problems is clarity. This is not to say that problems are clear from the start or that they eventually are completely clarified. Clarity is a matter of principle, not practice; it is ultimately a feature of the logic of problems, not concrete problems as such. Problems in society are continually subject to clarification, their historical paths strewn with clarifying claims and counterclaims (see Spector and Kitsuse 1987; Schneider 1985; Best 2011). This is the stock-in-trade of social movements, from political and economic movements to newer identity and self-help movements. As far as clarity is concerned, the goal of social movements is to transform the vagueness of what is troublesome into what is claimed to be clearly problematic—what might be called "problematization." Whether troubles center on the body, behavior, the mind, relationships, or groups, the related mission (if it is taken up) is two-pronged: to concisely establish the taken-for-grantedness of a problem in what is otherwise vaguely understood and to marshal evidence of that. As John McCarthy and Mayer Zald (1977) instructed years ago, clarification is not just cognitive but entails organization and evidence, without which the clarification process is likely to falter or fail.

The logic of problems extends beyond social movements to what already is established and professionally relevant. Guiding texts, such as various editions of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) of the American Psychiatric Association and the many versions of the Big Book of self-help addictions groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anony-

mous, are well known and widely used for purposes of clarification. They textually inform a huge public and a swath of service providers and organizations of what is presumed to be evidently problematic, not just troublesome, in life. The DSM alone details a problematizing system, quantitatively organized in terms of too much or too little, for virtually every conceivable form of experience. It is just one of a panoply of texts whose discursive conventions are well established, indeed professionalized, offering formal guidance for how to problematize troubles by eclipsing vagueness. More and more, problematization is "textually-mediated," as Smith (1987, 1990) would put it. It is organized not only to categorize problems but also to actually write and read them into troubled lives. The textual demands of problematization are now so persuasive and time-consuming as to virtually transform professional practice into being as much a matter of documentation as it is a matter of service and care.  

DEPROBLEMATIZATION

Challenges to problem clarity also are the stock-in-trade of social movements. Efforts to deproblematize troubles have emerged on many fronts, from the goal of deproblematizing drug use, body weight, and alternative sexualities to the aim of deproblematizing particular groups and relationships. These also are two-pronged. Whether it is being overweight, having a mental illness, being addicted, or courting undesirable peer influences, the mission on one front is to question the assumption that the problems in question are self-evident and on the other front to provide factual proof of that. "Naturalization," "normalization," and "neutralization" are common terms of reference for this process (see Sykes and Matza 1957).

The Where Question

As for the where question, in his book Street-Level Bureaucracy, Lipsky encourages us to explore a space where we might not have considered looking if the borders of the service relationship were as clear-cut as Weber and Kaika made them out to be. Lipsky advises us to open to view the everyday practices of service workers, which "are not reducible to programmed formats." He encourages us to look in order to see and to make visible how policy is realized in the discretionary flux of troubles and problems in the frontline sites of service provision. Arguing that the logic of troubles
coexists with the logic of problems in the very practice of providing and receiving services, turning policy into a matter of everyday life. Lipsky collapses the Weberian divide.

If, as Weber would have it, service organizations ideally deploy rules, regulations, and policies that are expert, ironclad, and promote efficiency, Lipsky’s description of street-level service provision suggests something strikingly different. The everyday challenges of practice on the front lines, Lipsky argues, move in many directions, inexorably mixing logics and their related rights in the “border work” entailed (see in this volume Carr, Chapter 4; Newman, Chapter 16; Pöösö, Chapter 9). Attention to the street-level activities of service provision makes visible the persistent intrusions, shifting alliances, and flux of extenuating circumstances that cross the borders of service intervention. Presenting the central argument of his book and ending with a suggested refocusing on the complex challenges of “client-processing,” Lipsky writes:

The book is grounded in observations of the collective behavior of public service organizations and advances a theory of the work of street-level bureaucracies as individual workers experience it. I argue that the decisions of street-level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures, effectively become the public policies they carry out. I maintain that public policy is not best understood as made in legislatures or top-floor suites of high-ranking administrators. These decision-making arenas are important, of course, but they do not represent the complete picture. To the mix of places where policies are made, one must add the crowded offices and daily encounters of street-level workers. Further, I point out that policy conflict is not only expressed as the contention of interest groups, as we have come to expect. It is also located in the everyday struggles between individual workers and citizens who challenge or submit to client-processing (Lipsky 1980:xiii).

Lipsky points out that, at close range, we can observe that troubles and problems are not distinct entities located in separate places in practice but rather are part and parcel of the service divide itself, reflectively both affecting and constructing it. In practice, providers and users overlap in applications of the logics of troubles and problems. At the street level, some troubles may not be problematized and some problems may be deproblematized, for all practical purposes. Needs and interventions are subject to the ever-present categorical activity, deployed logics, invoked expertise, stakes in the matter, negotiations, and resistances that run through the service relationship (Gubrium and Holstein 2001). Both vagueness and clarification continually weld their way into, out of, and around the alleged problems in question (cf. Gubrium and Buckholdt 1982; Gubrium 1992; Rose 1998; Gubrium and Holstein 2001).

Observed closely and critically, the street level and its discretion are everywhere in the service relationship. If, as Habermas maintains, the “life world” (everyday life) is increasingly colonized by the logic of problems, the life world’s practices on all fronts remain a phenomenon in their own right, uncolonized and ever present within the colonization project (cf. Schön and Rein 1995; and see Newman, Chapter 16, this volume). Ambivalence and ambiguity are unassailable ingredients of the life world (see Järvinen, Chapter 3, this volume), not historically diminished with modernization (Levine 1981). What Habermas calls “system” is strategically used in the life world, as much as the system ostensibly enables and uses its actors (see Barnes 2000:87–92). New and controversial social policy developments certainly influence, but they do not displace, the everyday practice of engaging what is and what is not a serviceable problem in the encounters between service providers and service users.

If colonization has any concrete meaning in practice, it refers to the process by which only some of what is common to providers and users as everyday members of society is rendered categorically visible. In this regard, the idea of formal organization is as much a mechanism of invisibility as it refers to concerted designs for work and action. Being formal, its articulations systematically make visible the operation and by-products of the logic of problems, while systematically rendering invisible or otherwise tangential the operation and by-products of the logic of troubles. This is what colonization should mean, not the displacement of everyday life.

The task of reimaging the human service relationship relates directly to this. It involves rendering visible what has increasingly become invisible in human service provision. Noticing and documenting the differential visibility of troubles and problems is the aim. The contributors’ common procedure has been to recognize and trace the everyday sentiments, ambivalences, conceptual tensions, working resilience, strategic agency, and
artfulness of the interaction order as it unfolds in concrete sites of human service provision. The iron cage notwithstanding, there is a shared commitment to opening to view the moral complexity and local inventiveness of human service intervention.

As Goffman contended for the interaction order, the chapters of this book argue that the everyday "micro-politics" of troubles and problems is the proper grounding for understanding human service policy. Current experience-distant models of service provision distinguish and describe service actors in terms hardly recognizable in practice. By turning us to everyday life, the chapters problematize such models of service provision. In doing so, they bring our attention and our will to the need for a more realistic and multi-sided vision. The rationalization of everyday life will not disappear. As Weber lamented, its by-products are increasingly apparent in our lives. What he (and Kafka) did not undertake to conceptualize, examine, and document is policy and service in practice, the operating contours of which this book unsettles and reimagines, freeing us from iron-cage necessity.

NOTES
1. While, analytically, it is important to identify the various operating "logics" of action, such as Assenmatic Mel (2000) has admirably outlined for care and eathing in her book The Logic of Care, one might argue that its idealized philosophical horizons can never be realized in everyday life. Everyday life is filled with intertextually contingent and diverse logics, which overlap, confirm, compete with, and resist each other in the flux of practice. Especially important in the following chapters on the human service relationship are the organizational contingencies—the organizational embeddedness—of care (see Gubrium and Holstein 1990, 1997, 1999). The logic of care, in other words, coexists in practice with the logic of service, which would then turn as much to management and work as to care and eathing in reimagining the service relationship (see Alfred and O'Flynn 2011). It is the coexisting and increasingly present relational logics of service and care that are the focus of this book.
2. American sociologist Talcott Parsons translated The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism from the German into English, in which the English "iron cage" was used for Weber's original German "stahlharten Gehäuse." Peter Buckthorpe suggests that the English "shell as hard as steel" would have been better, given the sense of inescapability present in Weber's depiction (Buckthorpe 2001).
3. There is reason to believe that there was an intellectual line of influence between Weber and Kafka. Max Weber's younger brother, Alfred, was Kafka's professor at Charles University in Prague, and it is likely that Kafka learned of Max's work from Alfred (see Litowitz 2011).
4. As this volume goes to press nearly forty years after the publication of the micro-politics article, a book-length explication by Emerson of the perspective presented in the article has appeared under the title Everyday Troubles: The Micro-politics of Interpersonal Conflict (Emerson 2014). It provides many useful illustrations of the locally contingent character of everyday troubles. But in contrast to the view taken in our book and in the Emerson and Messenger article, the Emerson book frames the development of troubles through time as sequential. According to Emerson's book, the course of troubles progresses in a way of beginnings through several stages of social complicity until, in the final stage, authorities and/or professionals become involved. The relationship between troubles and problems, in other words, is linear, which stands in contrast to the more reflexive relationship suggested in the micro-politics articles and, in part, inspires our discussion of the everyday logics of troubles and problems. No matter how clear problems are or become "in theory," all are continually troublesome in practice because they are located in a world of contingencies. The perspective presented in Emerson's book violates a signal ethnographic precept, which is not to treat a topic of study (sequential) as an explanatory resource (see Heritage 1984). Certainly, empirically, facets of troubles may be patterned through time to eventually become clear and authoritative in practice, but that is something to be conceptually problematized and explained, not something to be taken for granted. As I have shown in a number of monographs empirically centered in "iron cage" human service organizations, the contingent nature of everyday life is always in effect, extending to its temporal organization (Buckthorpe and Gubrium 1979; Gubrium and Buckthorpe 1983; Gubrium 1991, 1992, 1993).
5. See David Buckthorpe and Jaber Gubrium's study of a service organization in which the representational burden of problem documentation has overwhelmed its therapeutic activity (Buckthorpe and Gubrium 1979). The authors describe ethnographically how an extensive regime of behavioral assessment for children with conduct-control disorders and emotional disturbances is managed in the process of treating the children's problems.
6. That troubles and problems continually wind their way across the landscape of service provision, crossing both informal and formal borders in the process, suggests that they "travel" various sites of articulation (see Clarke et al. 2015). There is no absolute "colonial" power or process that straightforwardly renders the meaning of policy in practice, only the metaphorical semblance of it. As experience-distant policies move between places and organized settings, they prompt varying configurations of understanding about what the policies mean and how providers and users are to apply them. As Clarke and others argue, this requires a process of experience-near "translation." The perspective requires not only a concerted turn to, and documentation of, the local whatis, hows, and wheres, but also the whens, of the policy process. The chapters in this volume present discussions and examples of located and occasioned "assemblages" of policy articulations and interventions, none of which is reducible to
experience-distant metrics of their components. Assemblages of service provision, instead, must be understood on their own terms sui generis and are grist for reimagining the human service relationship.

REFERENCES


