Moments and Their Men:
Cultural Architectures and Interactional Ecologies of Belonging and Inequality

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A Dissertation presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the University of Virginia in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Sociology

University of Virginia
August 2015

Abstract

Late-modern America is experiencing unprecedented inequality, heightened individualism, and pervasive neoliberalism. In a climate characterized by the erosion of traditional sources of community, provisional commitments, and institutional liquidity, our belongings have become feeble and ephemeral. As a recent proliferation of scholarly and popular literature reveals, the day-to-day experiences of inequality and belonging are less bound to macro-social identifications and are instead becoming increasingly contextual.

Following Erving Goffman's recommendation that sociologists should focus on "moments and their men" rather than on "men and their moments," this research is a micro-sociology of encounters. I conducted 4000 hours of participant observation and 45 interviews with participants in three contexts: a volunteer fire department, a CrossFit gym, and amongst physicians at an academic health center. This research design allowed me to examine variations in culture and qualities of encounters. I became a firefighter, fighting fire and socializing in the firehouse; I joined a CrossFit gym and worked out with other patrons; and I shadowed young doctors in a hospital and integrated into their informal social world. Participation in the extended day-to-day action of these groups allowed me to offer deep, descriptive accounts and to understand the visceral experiences of belonging and inequality.

I coin the terms "cultural architecture" and "interactional ecology" to explicate the social foundations of belonging and inequality in face-to-face encounters. Cultural architectures are meanings and practices of a collective. Interactional ecologies are characteristics and modes of interaction. Fulfilling Goffman's prescription for sociologists to focus on interactions, I operationalize these concepts as qualities of encounters. When thinking about both culture and modes of interaction, I draw a distinction between institutional infrastructures and grassroots practices. Institutional infrastructures are imposed on those inhabiting encounters from positions of power and influence. These are central to upholding inequalities. Meanwhile, grassroots cultural practices emerge from the people constituting encounters and are central to creating and maintaining belongings. I argue that culture is central to sustained belongings, while qualities of encounters shape situational belongings in foundational ways. I conclude that cultural architectures and institutional ecologies function in dialogue to yield situational and sustained belongings and inequalities.

These belongings and inequalities not only develop amongst groups, but also operate in dialogue with broader systems of community and hierarchy. I assert that sociologists have much to gain by focusing on encounters, rather than individuals. Looking to encounters, we are able to better understand how belonging and inequality processes are negotiated and upheld by organizational constituents as they work, volunteer, and socialize. This dissertation highlights the unique cultural content that makes each group idiosyncratic, while also demonstrating that there are common qualities of encounters and culture that are binding and divisive across all groups.

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Acknowledgements

Writing a dissertation is a humbling experience. I could not have completed the project without the help and support of others. First and foremost, I am indebted to the firefighters, CrossFitters, and physicians who welcomed me into their lives as a researcher and as a peer. My involvement in each of these groups not only advanced the project, but also forced me to grow as a person. I am grateful to the late Lee Bouvier, my undergraduate mentor, for challenging me to pursue a career as a professional sociologist. At the University of Virginia, Allison Pugh played a central role in the dissertation. Her intellectual guidance and thorough feedback were invaluable. My other committee members—Sarah Corse, Josipa Roksa, and Richard Handler—each provided thoughtful critiques and challenged me to be a better sociologist. I am also thankful for excellent editorial assistance from Sarah Crain and Katie Lebert. Finally, I am indebted to Ava Adinolfi, Michele Darling, Molly Petry, and Russell Scarborough for reading drafts of chapters and providing thoughtful feedback. With the support of those who I mentioned and all of the others I neglected to include, this dissertation is a collective accomplishment.

Chapter 1. Toward a Micro-Sociology of Encounters

Following Erving Goffman's proclamation for sociologists to focus on "moments and their men" rather than "men and their moments," I develop a model of situational and sustained belongings and inequalities. I coin the terms "cultural architecture" and "interactional ecology" to examine the social worlds of physicians, firefighters, and CrossFit gym patrons. I argue that "a sociology of encounters" allows sociologists to disembody belonging and inequality from the individual and locate it in the social. This research asks sociologists to move beyond understandings of the social world as either an arena of inequality or a search for community. A sociology of encounters also asks us to develop a sociological approach that bridges cultural and interactional perspectives, while moving beyond macro-social institutions or individual narratives. This framework allows us to explicate the micro-social foundations of belonging and inequality in face-to-face encounters, which has much utility in a late modern climate characterized by institutional liquidity, provisional connections, heightened individualism, and pervasive neoliberalism.

Southern Academic Health System

In the tiled hallways of the local hospital, young doctors-in-training endure pressures of competency and performance under duress. On a Sunday afternoon, the emergency department is oddly slow. There is a psychiatric patient who is in an isolation room waiting for the on-call psychiatry resident to appear. His muffled screams provide a backdrop for an attending physician and a third-year medical student to consult a twenty-four-year-old, white, male patient with a golf-ball-sized staph infection on his cheek. Joking, apologetic comments are made for the screams of the psych patient; the attending comments, "It sounds like somebody doesn't wanna go to work tomorrow." Everyone laughs. The staph patient and the medical staff then bond over a common alma mater.

In an open dialogue that includes the patient in the decision process, the choice is made to lance the infected area and take samples to send off to the lab. Due to the patient's affable attitude toward the impending procedure, the attending smiles and admits, "I love doing these." As she gathers the necessary materials and dons a protective shield and gown, she eagerly corrals

an unengaged medical student and a nurse. Everyone stands around, looking over her shoulders with trepidation or anticipation. As she slices into the infection, the pressurized boil explodes, sending a splattering of blood and infection all over her protective headgear. Containing his pleasure, the medical student shifts his eyes to meet those of the nurse, and he smirks; but his eyes convey his suppressed satisfaction. Including the patient in the interaction, the attending comments drily to the patient, "Wow, that's the biggest one I've ever done." Looking back to the spectators, she turns around in acknowledgment of the moment seeming to convey, "We'll laugh about this later," suppressing pride, satisfaction, or the pleasure of lancing the infection.

This event, while unique in its specifics, is actually fairly typical of the kind that produces momentary connection among those present, which I label as an instance of "situational belonging." While personality and other individualistic qualities certainly play a role, there are qualities of the encounter that lead to bonding in the moment and have potential for more enduring forms of belonging.

There are particular aspects of the event that allow for solidarity to emerge amongst the staff and patient. The common nuisance of a psychiatric patient provides a basis for bonding. This is a shared, external hardship that leads to a coalition of suffering. In addition, the ER was slow, free of "swarming poor people without insurance and mothers with newborns that aren't really sick," as one twenty-six-year-old medical student characterizes the clientele. Thus, the pace of work is not stress-inducing, which allows time and interactional space for an informal exchange with the patient.

Additionally, there is no ambiguity about the procedure, which leads to bonding around a common objective: lancing, flushing the infected area, packing it with gauze, and sending labs away for testing. While the procedure is routine, it also has a moment of excitement that makes it

more engaging than someone complaining of "chest pain" or "trouble breathing." Compared to the dreary and tiresome parade of emergency department events, medical professionals understand the lancing of a boil as a treatable symptom and as a "fun" procedure that generates a momentary high for those involved. The encounter also holds potential for the formation of community if the event becomes a department legend, repeatedly recounted for its drama.

Culture is not only produced in this encounter, but existing shared culture is activated in this exchange. The common social class background and alma mater activates cultural affiliations shared by the physician and the patient. These cultural identities do not automatically produce solidarity, but they can activate affinities amongst participants that allow access to a stock of collective culture that can ease belonging in the moment.

The interactional ecology of the encounter provides potential for belonging, but it is the activation of culture in the interaction that allows for situational belonging to emerge from the context. I am interested in the brokering of belonging and inequality in face-to-face encounters.[1] This research explores the cultural and interactional roots of belongings and inequalities. It begs us to question the role of culture and the characteristics and mechanics of encounters that yield belonging and brew inequality. Those present do their part to activate particular cultural ideas and practices that negate the inequality intrinsic to the patient/physician relationship to make the encounter come off as a moment of belonging. This example shows that mobilized cultural dispositions allow medical professionals to have fun at work, leading to situational belonging. Next, an example of an encounter from the fire service shows how trauma can have a similar outcome, while also setting the stage for sustained connections.

[1] According to Goffman (1961b), an encounter is "a focused gathering" or "a situated activity system." Unlike a group that has members, a gathering is constituted interactionally. It consists of persons physically present and engaged in some activity with a single focus of attention.

Monacan Volunteer Fire Department

Across town, the Monacan Volunteer Fire Department is staffed twenty-four hours a day. At 11:47 p.m. on a Friday evening, both of Monacan's engines are dispatched to provide mutual aid to an adjoining city for a structure fire with possible entrapment, meaning there may be people trapped inside. On our way to the scene, updates come in from the on-scene units—"heavy smoke showing, confirmed structure fire, deploying lines," "structural collapse on division one; unstable floor," "primary search of division one complete, nothing found," and "primary search of division two complete, nothing found." The city's career [paid] department has employed aggressive tactics and adopted an assertive posture to attack this fire.

Upon arrival, our four-man crew of volunteer firefighters is sent to the rear of the structure to provide backup and support. There is already a career crew attempting to access the basement, facing blackout smoke conditions and a deep-seated fire. After ten minutes of work, they are unable to extinguish the fire from the basement stairs. Next, two Monacan firefighters make entry and attempt to extinguish the fire from the stairs, but make no more progress than the first crew. The city pulls all personnel out of the structure and attempts to attack the fire from the exterior. This is a prudent decision, as conditions of the basement are not conducive to life and the rest of the house has been cleared.

After external operations fail to extinguish the fire, Firefighter Gregory and I are assigned to make entry to the basement, extinguish the fire, and complete a primary search. One of the city firefighters describes to us the location of the collapse and directions for how to locate the basement stairs. Gregory is a ten-year veteran who adopts the officer position of completing radio traffic and guiding our actions, while I am on the nozzle. We slide down the stairs, mindful to stay low and below the hot smoke as we crawl our way through the total blackout conditions.

As we reach the bottom of the stairs, we find about eight inches of water in the structure and can see the glow of flames in the adjoining room. As we load the hose into the "fire compartment," we find that the floor we had just crossed over and the wall supporting the stairs are heavily involved in flames. This is the exact reason why basement fires are so dangerous. Manning the 1¾-inch hose line, I am able to quickly knock down the fire.

Gregory directs us to begin a primary search of the floor—a quick search to scan for obvious victims in beds and on floors. The basement is full of mattresses, Christmas decorations, and boxes of clothing that are all floating about in the water, which makes the search difficult. We remain on our hands and knees to stay beneath the hot smoke and to feel for victims, but blackout conditions and waterlogged junk impede swift progress. Moving on to the second room, we find an unfinished portion of the basement containing a furnace, bicycles, and bulk storage. Visibility is improving at this point. We proceed to a third room filled with furniture and flooring from the collapse that inhibits a detailed search. Gregory points out some active fire above us. With increasing visibility, we clear the fourth and final room of the basement.

I retrieve the hose line to extinguish visible fire and soak the smoldering area surrounding the collapse. The seriousness of a life-or-death situation lifts as it becomes clear that the fire is out. Gregory jokes: "Put that shit out so we can go home." I am feeling an emotional charge and relief while I knock down the remaining active fire. As I am putting out the fire, I hear Gregory updating command over the radio: "Engine 2 Bravo to command, visible fire knocked down. Primary search complete. We're cleaning up hotspots before we head out."

Gregory then yells, "Oh my god. Is that a hand? Is that a mannequin?" I look over to see Gregory backing up on to the basement stairs. My heart rate skyrockets as I make my way over to him. At the base of the stairs, under the water, is a hand peeking out from underneath a

blanket. With Gregory poised on the stairs, I attempt to discern whether this is a body or not. The pale and lifeless body is wrapped in a blanket, totally submerged under water at the base of the stairs. My attention is on the wedding band on the lifeless hand and I cannot focus on Gregory's ramblings. All I can think of is how, amidst all of the debris and beneath the water, I had crawled across the submerged body three separate times.

In a watershed moment of silence after unwrapping the body, all I can hear is Gregory's rapid and heavy breathing. I can tell that he is in no condition to update command. I radio command, recalling the familiar phrases that are rehearsed in training: "Engine 2 Charlie to command. We have located a victim, priority black [meaning deceased], in the basement. Repeat, we have found a victim directly at the bottom of the staircase in the basement." Command repeats the information back to me. I inform them that I'm leaving the nozzle on the victim and that we are exiting along the hose on the rear of the structure.

Upon exiting the structure, we are met by two chiefs and two city firefighters. Gregory rips off his helmet, mask, and gloves and walks away from the scene hyperventilating. One of the chiefs follows him. Two city firefighters and the assistant chief probe me for information. I give detailed information about the conditions and location of the body. After sending the two firefighters into the basement, the chief asks me, "Are you doing alright?" Even though I am upset by the find, I tell him that I am fine. The chief points at Gregory who is bent over in the yard as if he might throw up and says, "You stay with him. Don't leave him alone. Y'all head over to rehab and let them check y'all out." We walk to the "rehab" area, where we get our vitals taken and rehydrate. This is standard practice for all firefighters exiting a structure fire. The head chief, the medic, firefighters from my crew, and the fire marshal all inquire about how we are holding up in the wake of locating the body.

As the fire is out and there is a confirmed fatality with suspected foul play, the scene is quickly secured by the fire marshal who begins an investigation. We learn that there is a second body, also wrapped in a blanket, at the base of the stairs. We later find out that the victims were a mother and a daughter who died of traumas before the fire. An acquaintance of the daughter was later charged with first degree murder and arson.

The chief from the city makes a few remarks to a gathering of all of the firefighters in the street before releasing us from the scene:

> So, this is gonna be a mini debriefing before we have the full one in a few days. Basically, all of you already know that we had two fatalities. I don't want anybody going home hanging their head. That's as good as I've seen it. It took us five minutes to get there, five minutes to get a line in the door, and fifteen minutes later, we'd found the victims. That's a smooth-running fire. All of you did an amazing job. There's nothing that we could have done to change the outcome of this situation; it's looking like they were long dead before we got here. I want to thank you for your professionalism and hard work. Y'all from Monacan, we were glad to have ya. When we heard that we had two [engine companies] coming from y'all, I knew we had two good engines with full crews that knew what they were doing. Y'all did a great job. Thank you guys. I really appreciate your work. That was a smooth-running structure fire…

As the bureaucratic leader and symbolic figurehead of the career department, the chief's speech aims to compliment everyone's efforts on the operation, despite the unfortunate outcome. His comments also pay tribute to our mutual aid, setting politics aside to honor effort on the fireground.

After returning to the station, my captain checks in on me: "Are you sure that you're alright? Just so you know, there are lots of resources available for you. There's a chaplain, counselors, there's me. All that's there if you want." The next morning, the chief from Monacan comes in to find me in the kitchen, squeezes my arm, and gives me a look of sympathy and understanding. Words are not always necessary to show support. Similarly, the rest of the forty-eight-hour shift involves many similar check-ins from the more experienced firefighters and chiefs from the station. All of those who face such circumstances in the line of service share an understanding of the personal trauma of processing death.

Encounters are where belonging and inequality play out. Grotesque death and injury often results in severe, long-lasting distress (Kerasiotis and Motta 2004; Lamposa and Alden 2001), but these hardships also develop connections. The traumatic event forges bonds between Gregory and me, amongst members of my duty crew, and between City and Monacan firefighters. In the weeks that follow, I have a private dialogue with Gregory that involves discussion of how each of us is coping with the event, our ability to sleep, and our focus on work. Amongst the eight members from our station who were on the call, the experience is binding. The aggressive and dangerous entry to a basement fire is not an approach that Monacan's leadership would sanction. So, the fire becomes a bit of a department legend, insofar as it departs from everyday opportunities to engage in culturally admired actions. Newer members, in particular, look up to those firefighters who have had these experiences. Thus, the trauma of finding a body earns respect amongst newer people and sympathy from those above.[2]

This case of locating what turns out to be a murder victim in the basement of a burning home leads to situational and sustained belongings between Gregory and me. Class culture and tastes are not the basis for bonding between us. This example begs us to consider the ways that certain encounters generate momentary connections and sustained belongings. An example from an elite gym offers further insight into how processes of connection and inequality play out in everyday encounters.

Alliance CrossFit

In a repurposed warehouse that has been retrofitted with soft anti-slip flooring and air conditioning, a collection of twenty-somethings gathers to do a CrossFit workout. These eight men and four women have arrived for the daily "WOD," or "workout of the day." In the shadow

[2] I focus on those inhabiting these encounters. Inter-institutional bonds are also formed. Working together on this scene also bridges relations between Monacan and the neighboring City department, as the volunteer engine companies worked seamlessly with those from the all-career City department.

of a whiteboard that documents the weights and times of those who attended earlier classes, the trainer has everyone share their names and he reviews the prescribed workout. At the end of the overview, the instructor reminds everyone: "Now remember, if you finish first, you need to cheer on those who are still working." Everyone begins with a frigid 400-meter run in the Appalachian winter weather. Upon returning, the entire group gets in a large semicircle to complete additional warm-up exercises and perform some stretches appropriate for the programmed workout. The staff strives to make everything a collective experience—everything. One instructor describes the collectivist orientation: "It's my job as a trainer, but I try hard to get people to love CrossFit as much as I love CrossFit. That's why I make it fun."

Today's workout consists of five rotations of six box jumps (jumping up and down on thirty-inch prefabricated boxes), nine toes-to-bars (an abdominal exercise where one hangs from a bar and swings one's feet to touch the bar), and twelve kettlebell swings (a repetitive motion of getting weight from between one's legs to overhead), all in as little time as possible. Loud, upbeat music is cranked up. Today, it's a Michael Jackson mix. After about four minutes and two rotations, a newer member, a relatively out-of-shape IT guy named Russell, begins to slow relative to the pace of the group. He begins stepping on to the tall box, as opposed to jumping. The instructor brings him over to a much lower box for him to use and says, "Go ahead and switch to V-ups"—an easier ab exercise involving lying on one's back and raising one's arms and legs to meet in the air. The proficient athletes finish the workout in just under seven minutes. Most people finish by the time the ten-minute mark has rolled around. By eleven minutes, Russell is slowly moving through his final set of exercises. By the time he struggles to complete the final movements, he is gasping for breath, hanging his head, and soaked in sweat. The instructor comes over, claps her hands, and yells heartily, "Come on, Russell! You got this."

Recovering from their workouts, several people clap, almost as enthusiastically as the instructor. Another male patron comments, "You got this, dude." Eventually, he completes his final kettlebell swing almost three minutes after everyone else. Russell sits on his box, head in his hands, eyes diverted to the ground, attempting to catch his breath.

After he finishes, the instructor turns down the music, directs us to put away our equipment, and energetically reminds us, "Everyone come to the whiteboard to give me your weights and time." Russell has moved to a wicker chair near the entrance, attempting to catch his breath, looking as if he is going to vomit. Eventually, one of the tenured patrons walks over to him, slaps him on the shoulder, and says: "Good job, dude, really. That's tough if you're not used to doing CrossFit, really. It never gets easy, but you'll get better at it, and it'll be more fun." This is an effort to negate the objective inequality in the encounter, keep Russell from giving up, and integrate him into the group. Russell looks up at him, and all he can muster is, "Type two fun, maybe."

Encounters such as the one with Russell are common in CrossFit. Relatively speaking, Russell has failed in this interaction due to lacking the physical ability necessary for the encounter. However, the benevolent condescension of a veteran works as a gentle stigmatization paired with an invitation to integrate. He is invited to invest in himself and integrate into the CrossFit collective. Russell eventually comes around to understand the high-intensity work of CrossFit as "type one fun," as he builds the necessary physical capacity to belong and integrates into the social network of Alliance CrossFit. Individuals are pushed to perform at their best, with their names, weights, and times all penned on a whiteboard at the front of the gym, but this is tempered by formally written rules and informal practices of the gym that generate situational

belonging and forge community over time. In CrossFit, an objective hierarchy rooted in physical ability is offset by institutional rituals and grassroots practices that facilitate community.

CrossFit is a commercial venture that follows general regulations and limitations of a gym that bears the brand's name. Most of these practices beg for patrons to invest in CrossFit culture. The very rules of "the box" serve to build lasting community; Rule #1 is, "Introduce yourself to everyone." Rule #2 negates hierarchy, "No egos!" It is a manufactured community that is generated by paid staff and voluntarily upheld by its participants (cf. Kunda 2006; Marschall 2012). Institutionally, CrossFit is all about integration. All the exercises are communal, done together in groups. The behavior of both the trainer and the patrons work to create community amongst participants. Formal competition is discouraged through a culture of teamwork. Trainers take the lead by encouraging the poorest performers to work harder and integrate into the group. Patrons seem to voluntarily buy into the collective mentality. CrossFit may be a manufactured community, but it is upheld by the everyday practices of CrossFitters. This case hints at a few of the ways that institutional cultural infrastructure and grassroots practices can overcome objective inequality rooted physical ability to yield both situational and sustained belongings.

What is it about the culture of CrossFit or the sort of workout that keeps Russell coming back? Similarly, what is it about the encounter that allows connection to occur in the emergency department? And what is it about fighting fire and the hardship of confronting death that leads to bonding between Gregory and me? Are there characteristics of culture that bind and divide these groups? Furthermore, why do some encounters produce bonding and others produce hierarchy?

Theoretical Question

All of us forge connection to others through the everyday encounters that can give our lives meaning, but at the same time these encounters produce both transient and stable inequalities. I am interested in the brokering of belonging and inequality in face-to-face encounters. This research addresses several questions to understand the cultural and interactional roots of belongings and inequalities: What are the characteristics of encounters that yield belonging and promote hierarchy in encounters? What are the roles of context and culture in shaping these outcomes? And how is it that some encounters yield momentary belongings or inequalities while others have enduring effects?

A Climate of Inequality and Uncertainty

Late-modern America is marked by a climate of intensifying inequality and uncertainty. Through industrialization, modernity, and now late modernity, the characteristics of city life and the sorts of interactions that happen in these cities shape the climate of belonging and inequality. I suggest that the culture of neoliberalism and ubiquitous individualism has set the stage for unparalleled levels of inequality while eroding traditional sources of community.

Contemporary America exemplifies modernity, a cocktail of freedom and inequality. Modern-day America is more diverse than ever before, yet the opportunities for disadvantaged groups have become more unequal (Logan 2014). Since the 1970s, there is an increasing accumulation of wealth by the wealthy (Krugman 2002; Perucci and Wysong 2008; Shapiro and Greenstein 1999; Thompson 2008). The rich have gotten richer, the poor have gotten poorer, and the middle class is falling behind (Fischer et al. 1996; Kalleberg 2011; Morris and Western 1999; Piketty 2014). The results are the most unequal income distribution of any advanced industrialized nation (Massey 2008), historically unprecedented levels of income and wealth

inequality, and limited social mobility (Allegretto 2011; “Inequality in the United States” 2014; Salverda et al 2014). Income inequality is paired with rising levels of residential segregation; people are more likely to live around those with similar incomes than in past decades (Badger 2012; Fry and Taylor 2012). Strides have been made to erode racial (Massey and Brodmann 2014) and gender inequalities (Streib 2015), but social class continues to structure inequality in contemporary America and affect every domain of social life (Fiske and Markus 2012).

Modernity’s industrialization and increasing division of labor has grave consequences for traditional sources of human connection. Ferdinand Tönnies ([1887] 1995) made a definitive characterization of modernity as a shift from "Gemeinschaft," or community built on shared residence and loyalty, to "Gesellschaft," community characterized by impersonal and fleeting relations between isolated people. Communities with strong norms and well-regulated behavior have atrophied, leading to a modern society defined by diversified culture and a pervasive self-serving pursuit of personal goals and interests (Durkheim [1893] 1964). Culturally, the transition to modernity involved a shift from a “collective consciousness” amongst its members to a society marked by specialization and individual consciousness, only held together by economic interdependence (Durkheim [1893] 1964). People fulfill niche social functions that result in integration, dependency, and social order (Parsons 1951; Parsons and Shils 1951), but these ties do not result in a meaningful sense of belonging (Durkheim [1893] 1964). Capitalist culture produces social alienation (Marx [1932] 1964; Mills 1951) and undermines community (Nisbet [1953] 1969). Modern citizens are no longer bound to common standards that form a cohesive community (Reisman, Glazer, and Denney 1950).

The very ecology of modern cities produces isolation and loneliness (Hortulanus, Machielse, and Meeuwesen 2006; Wirth 1938). Since the 1970s, traditional sources of

belonging, such as kinship ties, family, religion, class, and residential communities are atrophying and no longer provide robust and enduring sense of belonging (Bauman 2003, 2011; Diken and Laustsen 2005; Illouz 2007). Levels of civic engagement, volunteerism, and stocks of social capital are on the decline, particularly among the working class (Putnam 2000; Putnam et al. 2012; Smith 2007).

Perspectives on the Individual

This climate of exacerbated inequality and insecure connection sets the stage for inequalities and belongings to play out, but this offers little insight on the day-to-day lives of everyday Americans. Contemporary sociological research offers understandings of the lived experiences of inequalities that structure people's life chances and the provisional quality of connections.[3]

Economic class position structures one's life chances. Possession of capital, material goods, and economic positions provide a material base for a hierarchy of social classes (Marx [1848] 1969). Those in a social class share not only an economic position, but common culture (Bourdieu 1984, 1990; Lamont 1992). As practice theorists suggest, members of a social class share comparable life sensibilities that are inherited materially and through socialization.[4] This

[3] These perspectives build on and parallel theory and empirical research in philosophy, psychology, and biology. From Aristotle to Hobbes ([1651] 2003) to Rousseau ([1762] 2006) and beyond, philosophers have long argued about man's essential nature, excavating a tension between community and hierarchy (Adkins 1970). Some argued that people are inherently disposed to pursuit of hierarchy, while others contended that man is inherently communal. Psychologists mirror this opposition, finding psychological foundations to pursuits of status (Fiske 2011) and belonging (Benjamin 1988). In particular, cultural psychologists contend that there is something about being in a collectivist group that minimizes differences amongst insiders, while differences between insiders and outsiders become more pronounced (Iyengar, Lepper, and Ross 1999). Those who practice both psychological and sociological social psychologies operate under the presumption, latently or explicitly, that the individual is the starting point for understanding social life (Friedkin and Johnsen 2011; Westaby 2012). To be sure, social bonds or divisions surely also have neurological and developmental foundations, but unfortunately, there is too little dialogue amongst disciplines and too little integration of insights and findings (Conley, Fletcher, and Dawes 2014; Mikulincer and Shaver 2014; Plomin, Owen and McGuffin 1994).

[4] They do not describe themselves as "Practice Theorists," which has been associated primarily with anthropologists such as Ortner (1984) and de Certeau (1984). However, the term captures the emphasis their work shares upon individual practices as an outgrowth of cultural and structural forces.

"habitus" (Bourdieu 1984) or "social identity" (Bourdieu 1985) provides a basis for inclusion and exclusion (cf. Goffman 1951; Veblen [1899] 1953). Class culture provides a currency of embodied, objectified, and institutionalized forms of cultural capital for participants of a field to deploy in order to achieve "distinction" relative to others (Bourdieu 1984, [1986] 1997).[5] The homology between economic position and its cultural trappings are parallel social structures that uphold a system of inequality.

Class inequality is not the only kind of cultural inequality, however. Though class inequality is pervasive and it structures the life chances of everyone in Western modernity (Piketty 2014), there is not a perfect homology between class and culture.[6] This research does an excellent job of identifying how social class and its parallel culture may structure life chances generally, but it does not always order inequality in face-to-face encounters.[7]

[5] Drawing upon a Marxian foundation, Bourdieu (1984) axiomatically emphasizes how the terms of inequality are set by the dominant class and that elites employ strategies of "distinction" to vie for acceptance of their own worth by others, legitimizing cultural distinctions from non-elites. Practice theory paints the picture of the social world as an arena of inequality where individuals and groups pursue distinction from others. This perspective presumes that resources, cultural or otherwise, are being monopolized by those in power to perpetuate a stratified social system (Lamont and Fournier 1992; Lamont and Lareau 1988). Expanding upon Bourdieu's analysis of French society, extensive research explores whether social classes are coherent groups with a common habitus (e.g., Bryson 1996; Lamont 2000; Lamont and Molnar 2002; Lareau 2003). Much support is found for classed patterns of inequality and exclusion (Fiske and Markus 2012; Streib 2015).

[6] Bourdieu's framework remains at the center of this theoretical debate. Scholars argue that distinction is not only attained through discerning highbrow consumption, as Bourdieu initially maintained, but through "omnivorous" (Peterson 1992) eclectic tastes and participation in a spectrum of culture. Douglas Holt (1997, 1998) contends that cultural consumers do not find distinction through the consumption of a distinctive set of cultural objects, but by consuming a range of cultural goods in a distinctive manner (cf. McCoy and Scarborough 2014; Scarborough and McCoy forthcoming). Other research shows that the notion of class culture may not be as applicable in the American context (Halle 1993; Lamont 1992). In addition, symbolic boundaries based on cultural preferences are more fluid and complex than Bourdieu's rigid framework asserts (Halle 1993:196-200).

[7] There are other ways that culture can result in inequality, principally in how people come to develop understandings of their social worlds. The Bourdieusian framework can be criticized for an assumed presumption that cultural processes are embedded in power struggles and ultimately in material inequality (Alexander 2003). Jeffrey Alexander (2003) emphasizes that symbolic processes and ideas have an independent effect on social institutions and the people who inhabit them. He argues that practice theories reduce culture to "a dependent variable" and that culture can also be conceptualized as "an independent variable" that has more autonomy and gives more weight to inner meanings (Alexander and Smith 2001). This perspective emphasizes that strong emotional ties and shared narratives shape the behavior of people inhabiting institutions (Alexander 2003).

Economic inequality is pervasive, but this is paralleled with weak and provisional bonds to social institutions and others. The rise of neoliberalism has only exacerbated the decline of traditional sources of belonging. With prevalent deregulation, privatization, and withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision, advancement and failure are individualized (Harvey 2005). These changes have made workforce insecurity rampant, leaving Americans with one less outlet to find enduring community (Pugh 2015). The absence of social apparatus to facilitate equality and mitigate failure places the heavy burden of advancement on the individual more than in previous decades (Silva 2013). Some scholars even suggest that social class identities are becoming ambiguous and less salient than in the past (Collins 2000; Kingston 2000:119-48).

Though "one-upmanship" (Potter 1952) is not a new phenomenon, those raised under the ethos of neoliberalism have a more individualistic, assertive, entitled, and confident orientation than their predecessors (Duina 2011; Khan 2011; Twenge and Campbell 2009). In an American culture where ideology contends that advancement and failure are rooted in individual merit, inequality is widely accepted and equality violates dominant national values (McNamee and Miller 2014). Though America has always, somewhat paradoxically, forged solidarity in the celebration of individualism (Goffman 1967:95), there is an increasing degree of emphasis on the "cult of individuality" (Collins 2004a:370-74). As individualism becomes pervasive, traditional forms of community are atrophying. For the individual, the consequences are heightened levels of cynicism, depression, anxiety, and isolation (Twenge 2006). Americans are increasingly "lonely" or in a state of emotional disconnection, as they are more likely to live alone and less likely to have close confidants than in decades past (Olds and Schwartz 2009).

In this climate of pervasive inequality, atrophying institutions, and rampant individualism, there are new textures and modes of belonging emerging. Americans are finding belonging in different institutions than in past decades (Bender 1979; Fischer 2010; Illouz 2007). Instead of traditional sources of community, belonging is increasingly found in "camps" of belonging, sites of voluntary self-exemption, such as gated communities and party tourism (Diken and Laustsen 2005). The transitory meetings of clubs, festivals, and conventions—"wispy communities" (Fine 2012)—have become meaningful sites of cultural production and identity. Instead of getting involved in religious and civic groups, people are getting involved in organizations to pad resumes or accrue emotional dividends from their activities (Eliasoph 2011). Though many lament rising rates of "checkbook memberships" (Painter and Paxton 2014; Putnam 2000; Skocpol 2003), these are yet another manifestation of what contemporary active involvement looks like. Meanwhile, involvement in nonprofits is also on the rise (Budrys 2013:24). Community is surviving in the cracks, margins, and edges of well-entrenched public society (Bender 1979). Modernity includes less face-to-face community, while social media provides mediated connections.

Though the jury is still out on the fate on whether traditional community has withered or evolved (Fischer 2010), late modern America is an increasingly unequal and segregated world, characterized by rampant individualism, neoliberalism, and declining social and civic engagement. Traditional sources of community are atrophying, our bonds are provisional, our affiliations are liquid, and our belongings are fleeting and situational. Even in this climate, Americans continue to self-report feelings of emotional connectedness (Fischer 2011).[8] An unequal and "liquid" (Bauman 2011) modernity composed of weak institutions pushes people to

[8] Anthony Giddens (1990) argues that aspects of modern culture are degrading and dehumanizing, but these are paired with opportunities for a rewarding existence (cf. Coser 1991). Similarly, Klinenberg (2012) differentiates between living alone and loneliness.

form provisional bonds through constant interactional work in order to experience connection with others.

This research offers perspective into trajectories and experiences of the individual, but it offers very little insight into how belonging and hierarchy emerge in social groups. In a social climate where people are more isolated than ever due to exacerbated inequality and the withering of traditional community, the bases of inequality and belonging are also in flux. This begs us to question how inclusion and hierarchy form in times such as these.

Encounters and Interaction

In an era of pervasive inequality, institutional atrophy, and provisional connections, an eye toward the encounter can offer insight on hierarchy and connection. Once social class and occupation sort us into our social groups, inequalities and connections play out in the realm of face-to-face exchanges. Taking a micro-sociological focus, contextual and interactional qualities shape connections and hierarchies in face-to-face interactions.

Sociology has a long-standing tradition of looking at how qualities of context shape individual outcomes. There are many insights on how physical environments and certain modes of interaction at once push us to bond, deny us community, and lead to the emergence of hierarchy.

Physical contexts of encounters shape the actions of their participants in meaningful ways. George Herbert Mead (1934) set the stage by arguing that meanings are not only constructed within situations, but they are constructed, partly, from situations. Chicago School forefathers Robert Park and Ernest Burgess (1925) paralleled this pushback on individual explanations of human behavior by postulating that cities were environments much like ecosystems found in nature. A wealth of research in this tradition demonstrates how physical

environments and social structures in a community shape the behaviors of its inhabitants (Suttles 1968; Thrasher 1927; Wirth 1928, 1938; Zorbaugh 1929). In the early 20th century, like today (Vasishth and Sloane 2001), urban environments produce weak social bonds, empty relationships, and interaction without emotional integration. These structural conditions are not conducive to the emergence of traditional forms of belonging amongst family, religion, homogenous work groups, and residential communities.

A later generation of Chicago School theorists asked sociologists to take a more micro-social angle and to map the social ecology of behavior in small groups (Fine 1995). These scholars contend that people make meanings in specific social settings in relation to others as they perceive them (Blumer 1969; Goffman 1961b). These perspectives point out that there are not only physical structures, but interactional structures that shape human behavior.

This set the stage for thinking about how various social ecologies lead to different outcomes. Qualities of an interaction might lead to conflict, hierarchy, or solidarity (Black 2011; Falk 2001; Gould 2003), while location in a particular context or environment can produce social inequalities (Khan 2015). Social spaces can shape meanings held by those who inhabit them (Armstrong, Hamilton and Sweeney 2006; Bennett, Taylor and Woodward 2014; Bridges 2009; Gieryn 2000; Hockey and Allen-Collinson 2013, 2015; Mills 1940; Nichter 2015; Ross and Nisbett [1991] 2011). In some cases, our interactional contexts fundamentally shape feelings of social isolation and belonging (Hortulanus et al. 2006:156-75; Iyergar, Lepper, and Ross 1999). This research hints at the ways that contexts shape their people, but these perspectives convey static understandings of social life and need to account for dynamic interactional processes.

The work of Emile Durkheim, Erving Goffman, and Randall Collins suggest that there can be fruitful returns for looking at the action that transpires in face-to-face encounters. Emile

Durkheim's ([1912] 1995) canonical study of primitive religion shows that celebration of a group's common values, culture, and morality is the foundation of group identity and cohesion. Through ritualistic action surrounding a symbol of a group's "sacred" values, "collective effervescence" develops and instills a strong sense of belonging amongst participants. In other words, the shared, collective, and emotional excitement surrounding the confirmation of foundational cultural sentiments generates a sense of collective belonging.[9]

Applying Durkheim's insights about religion, Goffman helps to explicate the ritualistic foundation of face-to-face interaction in everyday life. He proclaims that the "interaction order" (Goffman 1983) is too often neglected in the study of social life (Goffman 1964). Much like rituals that play out in religious rites, there are rituals of everyday life that generate solidarity (Goffman 1967). A range of "interaction rituals" provide structure for face-to-face interaction in contemporary Western society (Goffman 1967). In these interaction rituals, interactants must maintain shared "definitions of the situation" and situationally appropriate presentations (Goffman 1959). For Goffman, these cultural rituals of everyday encounters allow us to navigate and to make meaning out of everyday exchanges (cf. Simmel 1950:36-39). Ritual is an interactional mechanism for the enactment of displays of deference and demeanor that allow people to affirm identities as competent members of a social order and to uphold a moral order of the group (Goffman 1967).[10] These rituals strengthen the group and differentiate the group from others (Goffman 1961b:14).

[9] These findings do not only apply to primitive religion. These same principles hold true in contemporary megachurches that employ ritual to purvey emotional and religious experiences (Wellman, Corcoran, and Stockly-Meyerdirk, 2014) and in small-group religious interactions (Dougherty and Whitehead 2011; Stark and Finke 2000).

[10] For Goffman, the rituals of everyday, face-to-face interaction uphold a moral order of the group. His exploratory work on "role-distance" (1961b), "games" (1961b, 1969), and "face-work" (1967) seek to "uncover the normative order prevailing within and between [the units of interaction], that is, the behavioral order found in all peopled places" (Goffman 1967:1-2), otherwise known as "the interaction order" (Goffman 1983).

Integrating the insights of Durkheim and Goffman, Randall Collins (1981, 1989, 2004a) shows how excitement *and* ritual generate enduring community, through participation in "interaction ritual chains." Ritualistic action that builds high levels of "rhythmic entrainment" generates high levels of "emotional energy"—a sustained emotional orientation of attachment to the group and its symbols. Belonging is not found in just any ritualistically repeated action; it is found in those situations that result in high levels of emotional energy. It is the pull of this interactional high that results from connecting with others in a ritualistic manner that is the draw of rituals.

Collins emphasizes these psychological foundations of connection in his discussion of emotional energy, but others help us to better understand how encounters have psychological effects on their constituents. Phenomenologically, we are drawn to others due to "the pull of belonging, and the fear of difference" (Pugh 2011:14). Whether it is economic, social, or cultural commonality, similarity can generate feelings of belonging (Bettie 2003). These feelings of belonging are "naturalized" through everyday practices (Fenster 2004a, 2004b). Participating in these everyday rituals plays a central role in the emotional experience of feeling "at home" (Yuval-Davis 2011:10) among others (cf. Pugh 2009, 2011; Yuval-Davis, Kannabiran, and Vieten 2006). For example, displays of similarity facilitate integration amongst children (Pugh 2009), certain collectivist ethnic groups (Raudenbush 2012), and those who share displays of similar material culture (Korteweg and Yurdakul 2014). Success and integration hinge on adhering to ritualistic displays and practices of specific institutions (Rivera 2015) and of social classes, insofar as classes are symbolic groups (e.g., Bourdieu 1985).[11] An "arc of connection" (Clark 1997:17-18) develops amongst those who offer sympathy to others, which creates or

[11] Interestingly, Bourdieu (1985) must shed his Marxist foundation to discuss belonging, openly breaking from Marx's economist emphasis on the material conditions of classes to focus on individuals' subjective symbolic understanding of "who they are" and their "social identity."

enacts a network of intimacy that builds "a social bridge" of belonging (Clark 1997:17). These social bridges of intimacy also create ties of obligation and reciprocity (Clark 1997:20), or "communities of coping" (Stroebaek 2013), that can help groups overcome challenges through the development of belonging in the face of hardship.

An understanding of rituals highlights how modes of interaction transform mere affiliation into meaningful belongings. Participation in ritualistic action yields solidarity in the short term (Goffman 1967) and community over time (Collins 2004a). Everyday rituals are binding, structured, and structuring forces that hold our groups together and allow us to make meaning out of and to navigate everyday life (Goffman 1967; Knottnerus 2011). While this literature gives perspective on belongings, however, research on ritual offers less insight on the micro-social foundations of inequalities.

In rituals, there is a basic distinction between those who participate and those who do not. Howard Becker discusses "outsiders" ([1963] 1973) as those who are unintegrated or alien, while Georg Simmel identifies "strangers" (1950) as those who are present in a community but are not fully members. Groups may shame nonmembers through ritualistic "degradation ceremonies" (Garfinkel 1956) that impose "stigma" on those who are nonconformists (Goffman 1963b).[12] In interactions, high levels of differentiation can lead to conflict (Aptekar 2015; Melamed and Savage 2013). Interorganizationally, groups generate belonging by defining themselves against those who are different (Aptekar 2015). Yet, hierarchy or inequality is more than a story of insiders and outsiders.

There is a scholarly debate surrounding the impact of rituals on hierarchy. Goffman (1959) discusses how people aim to present their best self in face-to-face encounters by

[12] Similarly, the concept of "madness" is constructed as a way to define, differentiate, and degrade people who are outsiders (Foucault 1988). Those who bear an "existential" or "achieved" stigma are viewed with considerable ambivalence by insiders (Falk 2001).

performing a form of "strategic interaction" (Goffman 1969; cf. Goffman 1963a). Emphatically arguing that Goffman and Collins emphasis on solidarity is misguided, Theodore Kemper (2011) argues that ritual is merely surface and that the driving forces of social life in interactions are the pursuit of status and power (cf. Derber 2000). These scholars focus on micro-connection or micro-hierarchy.

Interaction research offers insight into how environmental and interactional characteristics of encounters shape the behavior of their constituents. In particular, rituals are the interactional mechanisms of belonging at the group level (Durkheim [1912] 1995) and "humanity" at the societal level (Goffman 1967:42-45). This body of work also highlights the centrality of face-to-face interaction for understanding belonging and inequality. It is in the micro-social where we find the very foundations of civil society (Fine 1979, 2012). Missing in this conversation, however, is an analytical decoupling of qualities of encounters from the culture that is transacted within them.

Bringing in Culture

A focus on interaction and encounters can be enriched with theories of culture. Since the "cultural turn" in sociology (Alexander 1988; Nash 2001), sociologists have become more mindful of the ways that culture constitutes social relations and identities. Accounting for culture helps paint a clearer picture of how inequalities develop in encounters.

Looking within social institutions, we learn that there are important ways that culture is consequential for belonging and inequality. Institutions have their own endogenous cultural processes. Firehouses, hospitals, and gyms have "causal processes that occur *within* the cultural stream: mechanisms such as iteration, modulation, and differentiation, as well as processes such as meaning making, network building, and semiotic manipulation" [emphasis original] (Kaufman

2004:336). This theoretical position and associated empirical work emphasizes group culture as a significant determining factor of belonging and inequality, but in a manner that is not derivative of class inequalities. Class culture matters, but not all culture that matters is derived from one's social class.

Expanding on this notion, we can see that culture production, inequality, and belonging processes transpire within our institutions. An emerging school of "cultural ecology" focuses on "how ecological constraints shape and enable cultural production and change" (Kaufman 2004:337). Internal properties of cultural fields naturally, perhaps inevitably, lead to cultural differentiation and innovation over time. Research on baby names (Lieberson 2000) and intellectual fields (Abbott 2001) shows that there are endogenous processes of qualitative distinction that create self-perpetuating cycles of cultural change over time. Even amongst social groups that have class homogeneity, hierarchy still emerges along cultural lines (Gaztambide-Fernández 2009). This shows that cultural inclusion and hierarchy can function independently of macro-structural social forces.

Those who constitute institutions also manufacture their own culture in dialogue with institutional cultural forms. Cultural inequality may result from an amalgamation of esteem. Whatever term is used—status, prestige, respect, or esteem—this is a positive assessment that exists in the minds of others (Chan, 2010; Chan and Goldthorpe, 2007; Milner, 1994, 2004). It is a significant source of hierarchy that is not reducible to economic or political power (Weber ([1915] 1946, [1920] 1968: 926-940). This allows for culture to function as a base of inclusion and exclusion in a manner that is not necessarily bound to materiality.

Yet, there are also material and corporeal dimensions to culture that are quite consequential for groups. Culture is located in our physical bodies, displays, and performances

(Bourdieu [1986] 1997; Featherstone 1991; Giddens, 1991; Shilling, 2001, 2003; Wacquant 2004; Waskul and Vannini 2013). Bodily characteristics, clothing, material items, language, and demeanor provide bases for achievement in various institutions, including: within gym cultures (Abramson and Modzelewski 2011; Heiskanen 2012; Sassatelli 2010; Wacquant 2004), on inner-city streets (Anderson 1999), in musician culture (Lee 2009; Scarborough 2012), in service work (Otis 2011), and in America's schools (Bettie 2003; Lareau 2003; Milner 2004). These cultural qualities of individuals are of variable consequence for belonging and inequality depending on the institutional context.

Bridging cultural and interactional perspectives, we can look at interaction itself as having consequence for community and hierarchy. Established groups share a "group style" or "recurrent patterns of interaction that arise from a group's shared assumptions about what constitutes good or adequate participation in the group setting" (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003:737).[13] Instead of focusing on macro-social, intergroup exclusion, Eliasoph and Lichterman (2003:778) ask us to focus on "situational boundaries." This demonstrates how the shared culture of the group, specifically the pervasive manner of interacting, guides people to pursue one line of action or another, including bonding with others or seeking relative advancement.

The dominant form of interaction may dispose a group to hierarchy or community. Much ethnographic research displays how group style guides the behavior of participants. Amongst volunteers at not-for-profit organizations that service needy populations, a courteous and considerate group style unifies participants (Bender 2003). Meanwhile, high-tech companies promulgate a non-authoritarian, informal, and flexible work style that both unifies and controls

[13] For example, suburban activists' behavior is mediated by a group style of "timid affiliation" that makes participants more tentative about going public to support their cause while, at the same time, unifying the group through a common worldview. Similarly, bar patrons' "active disaffiliation" group style allows them to avoid serious explorations of opinion and focus upon conversation about external institutions. This group style allows a group of heterogeneous individuals to function as a group.

employees (Kunda 2006). A "group style" can also promote inequality, such as amongst investment bankers (Ho 2009) and other high-earning professions that embrace a culture of competition (Conley 2009). Thus, a shared cultural style shapes not only how people interact, but the ends that social actors pursue.

Culture and qualities of encounters order our lives in significant ways. Looking beyond the individual to interaction itself can provide a framework for understanding how culture and qualities of encounters can yield temporary and enduring connections and hierarchies. By forging a dialogue between interactionist and culture scholars, it is possible to develop a model that maps the cultural and interactional foundations of belonging and inequality.

Examining Belonging and Inequality

In a climate of exacerbated social inequality and provisional connections, those groups that can actually still demand high commitment from their members are particularly interesting settings for studying how bonds and hierarchy get made. Boots-on-the-ground observation of encounters within these groups provide insight on how interactional qualities and charged forms of culture lead to belongings and inequalities. Ethnography allows access to not only public events, but to insider-only encounters—to the institutional Goffmanian backstage. Accessing a variety of focused and unfocused encounters facilitates a sociological understanding of how culture and qualities of encounters shape their people.

Focusing on "moments and their men" rather than on "men and their moments" (Goffman 1967:3), I conducted over two years of ethnographic fieldwork and supplemental interviews with participants in three field sites: a volunteer fire department, a CrossFit "box," and amongst physicians at an academic health center. I became a firefighter, fighting fire and socializing in the firehouse; I joined a CrossFit gym and worked out with other patrons; and, I

shadowed young physicians in a hospital and socialized outside the hospital at their social gatherings. Participation in the day-to-day action and inaction of these groups allowed me to offer insider accounts and to understand the embodied experiences of success and failure. I supplemented this fieldwork with forty-five interviews to access individual perspectives on community and hierarchy. These experiences allow me to offer deep descriptions of three social worlds to understand belonging and inequality amongst ordinary Americans. This research design allows me to vary these contexts in terms of their culture and the qualities of encounters to examine how situational and sustained belongings and inequalities are products of interactional processes and cultural contexts.

Moments and Their Men: Theoretical Contribution to the Literature

Following Goffman's call to focus on "moments and their men" (1967: 3), I show how culture and qualities of interactions produce belonging and inequality in face-to-face encounters. In this dissertation, I argue that sociologists have much to gain by focusing on encounters and not people. I coin the terms "culture architecture" and "interactional ecology" to help us order the social qualities of encounters. Specifically, I look to culture and characteristics of encounters to understand how belonging and inequality are products of the social. Finally, I differentiate between "situational" and "sustained" belongings and inequalities. I argue that there is value in differentiating amongst situational belongings and inequalities—momentary affinities or hierarchies—and sustained belongings and inequalities—enduring communities and inequalities.

All of us forge connections to others through the everyday cultural practices that can give our lives meaning, but at the same time these practices produce both transient and stable inequalities. These bonds and distinctions not only develop amongst groups, but operate in dialogue with broader systems of inclusion and exclusion, as Pierre Bourdieu famously

demonstrated. To understand the role of culture, I draw a distinction between institutional cultural infrastructures and grassroots practices. Institutional cultural infrastructures are imposed on those inhabiting encounters by individuals in positions of power and influence. Grassroots cultural practices emerge from those inhabiting encounters. I show how these combine to form cultural architectures that yield situational and sustained belongings and inequalities.

These cultural exchanges operate in dialogue with the interactional ecologies of encounters. These interactional ecologies highlight the context and mode of interactions that play an active role in the production of situational belongings and inequalities. Further, both institutional and grassroots interactional structures provide spaces and mechanisms for connection and stratification that play a significant role in sustained belongings and inequalities.

I propose a sociology of encounters. Rather than privileging the perspective of the individual, I ask sociologists to think of encounters as social systems constituted by individuals. Looking to encounters, we are able to better understand how belonging and inequality processes are negotiated and upheld by organizational participants in an increasingly unequal world where connections are provisional. I argue that this perspective offers a distinctly sociological purchase on belonging and inequality.

Encounters in Medicine, the Fire Service, and CrossFit

An era of heightened individualism, declining civic engagement, and neoliberal ideology paints a top-down picture of self-serving individuals who lack meaningful ties to others. My research presents a bottom-up view of community and hierarchy in contemporary America.

Belonging

Alliance CrossFit and Monacan Volunteer Fire Department provide flexible, nontraditional communities for younger people who live away from their families or who may be

in periods of transition. Similarly, medical professionals form deep emotional connections with their jobs; for many, their work environment becomes a home for them (Illouz 2007).

Ephemeral connections also transpire in each of these contexts. Complementing perspectives that look toward social structure to explain the conditions of social life, I argue that it is necessary to attend to the content that is transacted in encounters. I argue that situational belongings emerge around common material and embodied culture. Meanwhile, enduring identifications with groups or contexts—sustained belongings—are the result of more complex cultural processes. Sustained belongings often result from emotionally-charged grassroots practices, such as common group style, definition of the situation, superstitions, and legends. Meanwhile, the interactional ecology of situational belonging is a product of physical environment, intimacy, hardship, and interdependency. While chains of solidarity-inducing encounters often yield enduring identifications, I argue that durable communities are forged and maintained through institutional rituals and grassroots practices that activate culture that is meaningful for those present in the encounter.

As opposed to a static conception of belonging or one grounded in the identity of the individual, I emphasize that belongings are multiple and are the product of encounters. By looking at encounters as opposed to individuals, it is possible to understand belonging as something that is produced and can be upheld or lost in interaction. Belongings have interactional and cultural foundations that are limited by qualities of the encounter. For example, the experience of manning an interior hose line in a structure fire limits the number of participants to two. Similarly, conversation in a slow hospital emergency department may shift to a discussion of specific medical school experiences, which can lead to exclusion of those who lack relevant insider knowledge. Thus, we can belong at one moment and not at the next. Rather

than locating belonging in the individual, understanding it as a property of an encounter allows for momentary, plural, and even conflicting belongings.

This research also helps us to understand how institutions, groups, and individuals face challenges to solidarity and community that transpire in face-to-face encounters. In particular, I emphasize how encounters are where the consequential action that leads to outcomes of belonging and inequality takes place. Encounters can be capricious, which can menace enduring community and lead to the emergence of individualistic pursuits. Death and injury, along with the incipient darkness and madness of certain situations—particularly in the life and death circumstances of firefighting and medicine—are hurdles to continued integration, especially in the absence of culturally valued action. Institutional and grassroots coping rituals help groups face hardship and challenges to continued involvement. Integration into a collective can result from institutional rituals such as ceremonies, prayers, and structured moments of silence. Team workouts at CrossFit, training in the fire service, and enduring "Boards" in medical school are formal interactions that generate community. Similarly, individuals' own grassroots practices also yield sustained belongings via shared superstitions, time spent accomplishing a task together, or shared intimate activities, such as eating together or an unstructured moment of silence. Superstitions about the occurrence of fires amongst firefighters or collective venting of fears and frustration to a close set of peers amongst overwhelmed and anxious medical students allow for these groups to connect and face hardship. I show how these interactions affirm group identity and generate situational and, in many cases, sustained belongings.

Across all three groups, I find that both cultural architectures and interactional ecologies produce belongings. In sum, interactional ecologies produce important situational belongings. Qualities of encounters, such as intimacy and shared hardship, often yield belonging in the

moment. Yet, grassroots culture is the foundation of sustained belongings, which underscores the centrality of culture for community.

Inequality

Belonging is mediated by inequality. To understand hierarchy in encounters, I map the cultural architectures and interactional ecologies of inequality in each of these three contexts. Institutionalized cultural hierarchies, such as social class or organizational rank, maintain enduring patterns of inequality, while interpersonal esteem or respect can inflect such structural distinctions with its own vibrant pecking order. In all three social worlds, most people spend a majority of their time among those of similar social classes. Oftentimes, institutional culture, such as certifications or valuable skills, provides salient organizational bases for inequality that structure hierarchy in meaningful ways. Amongst the encounters I documented in these contemporary American institutions, it was these meso-institutional cultural hierarchies that provided the strongest cultural foundations of inequality in everyday encounters. On the other hand, sometimes grassroots inequalities emerged, such as being the funny guy (at the right time) or having specialized insider knowledge can elevate one's status in the moment. However, most sustained inequalities had institutional foundations that were mediated by grassroots hierarchies situationally.

Meanwhile, interactional ecologies are central to situational inequalities, but less consequential for sustained ones. Watershed moments, institutional capriciousness, and scarce resources are qualities of encounters that lead to the emergence of situational inequality. I find that sustained inequalities can result from chains of inequality-inducing encounters, but are more often the result of rituals of exclusion and individualistic pursuits of advancement. Qualities of

encounters provide conditions that may be conducive to inequalities, but these interactions only come to life when they are enlivened with culture.

Inequality exists within and amongst groups. Inequalities, economic and cultural, shape and intersect communities of inclusion, but are only sometimes salient in internal group cultures. Across all three groups, qualities of encounters and cultural practices forge situational and sustained inequalities. For situational inequalities, qualities of the encounter play the most important role, with some additional help from the cultural components of these encounters such as jokes and ritual meanings. But for those inequalities that last from day to week to month, institutionalized positions and credentials become more important. Respect or esteem rooted in people's cultural practices can lead to the emergence of situational inequalities, but these are often fleeting.

As with situational and sustained belongings, situational and sustained inequalities involve a calculus of social factors. In this dissertation, I aim to highlight the roles of cultural architectures and interactional ecologies in a sociology of encounters.

Outline of the Dissertation

The remainder of this dissertation is organized as follows. Chapter two outlines my research methods and aims to give the reader a sense of the three contexts where I did fieldwork. I describe how I produced a "sociology of encounters" that examines how culture and properties of encounters generate belonging and inequality in encounters.

Chapter three outlines the cultural architecture of belonging. I show how situational belongings emerge around common material and embodied culture, but can also develop through culture creation in the moment. While common cultural meanings can be bonding, I argue that culture created together can sometimes yield deeper connections. These situational belongings

differ from sustained belongings, or community that endures beyond the bounds of an encounter. Chains of belonging-inducing encounters can forge enduring bonds that stay with people as they navigate other encounters and various institutions in their day-to-day lives. However, most occurrences of sustained belongings do not develop in this manner. I demonstrate how grassroots practices, such as common group style, definition of the situation, superstitions, and legends are binding. Meanwhile, institutional cultural infrastructure allows sustained belongings to endure in the gaps between face-to-face interactions. In sum, situational belongings often involve culture, but culture is absolutely central to durable community.

Switching focus from culture to interactions, chapter four outlines the interactional ecology of belonging. In this chapter, I show how interactional ecologies play a fundamental role in situational belongings. I argue that qualities of encounters, such as physical environment, intimacy, hardship, and interdependency, generate momentary connections. Meanwhile, sustained belongings are produced by interactional ecologies in two ways. First, chains of encounters with qualities that produce situational belonging can yield enduring connections. Second, ritualistic encounters that engage meaningful culture generate sustained belongings. I argue that these ritualistic encounters can either activate grassroots culture or institutional culture to bring participants together. Rituals that activate grassroots practices do a better job of integrating a small group, while institutional rituals are better at integrate individuals into large collectives.

Chapter five shifts focus from belonging to inequality and focuses on its cultural architecture. I find situational and sustained inequalities in face-to-face encounters are the product of institutional cultural infrastructures and grassroots cultural hierarchies. Situational inequalities are primarily the result of grassroots hierarchies—esteem and scorn—though

institutional distinctions also play a role in shaping the face of inequality. On the other hand, sustained inequalities are principally ordered by institutional distinctions. Yet, grassroots hierarchies of respect and stigma mitigate these hierarchies, especially in encounters where institutional influence is weak. These findings lead me to conclude that the enduring and interdependent qualities of institutions makes inequalities rooted in institutional distinctions more durable than those rooted in grassroots culture. These findings suggest that macro-inequalities do not paint a full picture of inequality. I argue that sociologists must attend to how institutional distinctions and grassroots hierarchies shape the lived experience of inequality.

Chapter six maps the interactional ecology of inequality. Inequality is not simply the sum of grassroots cultural practices and institutional distinctions. Qualities of contexts and the social ecology of encounters lead to the emergence of situational inequalities. I find that watershed moments and institutional inefficaciousness are interactional qualities that lead to the emergence of momentary hierarchies. Meanwhile, sustained inequalities can result from chains of inequality-inducing encounters, but are more often the result of individualistic pursuits or exclusionary rituals. This chapter helps us understand how institutional structure changes the face of inequality that emerges in encounters.

Chapter seven highlights the empirical and theoretical relevance of this research. I demonstrate how my research fulfills Erving Goffman's prescription for sociologists to focus on "moments and their men." I discuss the benefits of a sociology of encounters and show the ways that "cultural architectures" and "interactional ecologies" are consequential for yielding belonging and inequality. I also highlight the value of thinking in terms of situational and sustained belongings and inequalities. Finally, I demonstrate how a micro-social look at belonging and inequality in face-to-face encounters complements a perspective that focus on

individual narratives and macro-oriented understandings of social stratification. I argue that this perspective has heightened utility in an era of atrophying institutions, declining civic engagement, and provisional commitments.

A study of how belonging and inequality are made in everyday encounters, in environments that demand profound and daily commitments, helps us to better understand some of the more fundamental questions of our age: how do we find belonging in a world of atrophying community? What is the experience of inequality in an era of uncertainty? These are the sorts of questions that this research allows us to ponder. Taking a micro-sociological focus on encounters, I look to culture and interaction to understand belonging and inequality.

Chapter 2. Researching Encounters: The Firehouse, the Hospital, and the Gym

This chapter outlines my research methods. For the three contexts where I conducted fieldwork on encounters, I describe the qualities of the context and of those who inhabited the space. I outline how I used participant observation to examine encounters and how I supplemented this data with in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Across the three contexts, I spent more than 4000 hours in the field and I conducted 45 interviews. I employed a process of coding, memoing, and data analysis to examine the ethnographic and interview data. Following Erving Goffman's prescription for sociologists to study "moments and their men," I describe how I produced a "sociology of encounters" that examines how culture and properties of encounters yield belonging and inequality in encounters. I conclude with a discussion of the methodological contribution of a sociology of encounters.

Introduction to Researching Encounters

This research is a "sociology of encounters."[14] Face-to-face encounters are where the action of social life plays out. Thus, I use encounters as my primary unit of analysis to analyze how interactional ecology and cultural architecture shape belonging and inequality. I argue that this exploratory research into three separate contexts allows sociologists to develop an understanding of belonging and inequality in the micro-social.

In this chapter, I outline my method of choosing contexts to study encounters, as well as the qualities of each context and the types of encounters that transpire there. In addition, I explore the cultural qualities of those who inhabit these spaces. Next, I discuss my methods of conducting research in these contexts, the types of data I compiled, and how I analyzed this data.

Research Contexts

My research design varied the cultures and properties of encounters across three contexts where I observed encounters. My objective was to outline how culture and context shape

[14] Sociology looks beyond the individual to the social world for explanations and understandings of human behavior. Analysis can be performed at the macro-, meso-, and micro-levels of analysis. Societies, nations, racial groups, gender, social classes, geographic location, level of education, institutions, groups, and individuals are all ways of subdividing people to understand social life. On the one hand, explanations of human behavior that correlate behavioral outcomes with social characteristics offer a big picture assessment of aggregate social trends. On the other hand, amalgamation of personal narratives does more to respect individuals' perceptions of their behavior. Yet, both approaches are disconnected from actual social action.

belonging and inequality. The sites I chose were a local volunteer fire department, an academic health care center (a hospital affiliated with a medical school), and a CrossFit gym.

Sampling for Culture

These contexts were chosen, in part, due to the variations in culture. Though all of these contexts are historically white, male-dominated institutions, the culture of these contexts vary in terms of the class composition, the constitution of the group, and interactional style.

All three contexts have important similarities. They are demographically and culturally dominated by non-married, white men in their twenties. Racially, the firefighting and CrossFit contexts where I did my research are more than 90 percent white, but medicine is more diverse with about 50 percent whites, along with large portions of East Asians and Indians. Monacan Fire is about 85 percent male, Alliance CrossFit is about 65 percent male, and Southern Health is about 55 percent male. Roughly 90 percent of the participants in each group are under the age of forty. Both in CrossFit and the fire service, there are notable outliers. The majority of firefighters over forty are in command positions. CrossFit is a very young organization, but there is a trainer in her fifties who has repeatedly placed in national competitions and a few older patrons who are somewhat marginalized in the group culture. All three organizations have formal regulations and informal norms that espouse egalitarian ideals and preclude barriers; however, the fire department in particular includes many practices and conventions that can alienate women and minorities.

I selected groups based on variation in the social class of the populations. CrossFit and medicine are upper-middle-class cultures, while firefighting is a working-class culture. The physicians at Southern all have at least a college degree and are earning or have completed their M.D., though other workers from various backgrounds are employed in the hospital. CrossFit is

mostly populated by young professionals with college degrees, graduate students, and a few who only hold a high school degree. Firefighters mostly have high school degrees, though nearly half of my sample are taking college courses or have earned a college degree. The culture of this particular fire company remains working class in its morality and norms, but also adopts an open-minded approach to new firefighting technologies and approaches due to the influence and stewardship of a few highly educated officers.

These groups also differ in their reasons for existence: the fire department is a volunteer organization; CrossFit is a for-profit business of paying consumers; and Southern Academic Health System is an institution that provides education and patient healthcare. People come to Academic Health System for training and employment. People join the fire service for career training, to serve the community, and for fraternization. People enter CrossFit to get in shape amidst a supportive community. Though useful, these reasons for initial involvement gloss over the matrix of factors that lead to continued involvement in these organizations. These institutions serve different organizational functions and develop distinctive collective cultures.

The dominant interactional styles also vary across these contexts. As a whole, the group culture of medicine is a competitive culture, while firefighting and CrossFit are collectivist. In medicine, advancement is individualized, while firefighting and CrossFit have strong cultural emphases on teamwork and solidarity. Taken as a whole, I will argue that these cultural dimensions are consequential for the emergence and maintenance of belonging and inequality.

Sampling for Qualities of Encounters

The properties and characteristics of encounters also vary across these contexts. I attempted to locate contexts of encounters where the sorts of interactions were variable. Like

Erving Goffman (Williams 1988; Winkin and Leeds-Hurwitz 2013:111), my objective was to access a range of contexts to understand the underlying structures of interaction.

My research design allows me to document encounters at work, amongst those volunteering, and amongst those socializing. Though rooted in the contexts of a fire station, gym, or hospital, encounters occur in a range of contexts and include the joint accomplishment of various instrumental work-related encounters (ceremonies, work-related tasks, education, and maintenance) and recreational encounters (fraternizing, picnics, dinners, and parties). As much as possible, I attempted to gain exposure to a range of encounters in a spectrum of contexts. These contexts are rooted in physical locations that offer access to relatively private encounters, but the encounters I observed extended out into the public spaces, offering access to a wide range of unpredictable encounters. Across these contexts, I gained access to routine, day-to-day action, but also to life-and-death situations and downtime spent at happy hour or smoking cigars.

The Hospital, the Firehouse, and the Gym

By selecting these contexts, I was "sampling for range" (Weiss 1994). I utilized a "theoretical" or "purposive" sampling procedure (Strauss and Corbin 1998; Luker 2008) that exposed me to a variety of encounters, which allowed me to "go to places, people, or events that will maximize opportunities to discover variations among concepts and to densify categories in terms of their properties and dimensions" (Strauss and Corbin 1998:201).[15] I followed Kristin Luker's (2008:109) advice to "let theory tell you how to sample" by selecting field sites that would show variation in the cultural and interactional qualities and processes that produce belonging and inequality. Below, I discuss each of the contexts in this study, explaining their institutional functions, their membership, and the formal and informal organizational cultures. As

[15] For examples and discussion of this method, see Bridges (2011), Delaney (2012), Hochschild (1983), Newman (1988), Pugh (2009), Small (2009), and Wilkins (2008).

most accounts in this research focus on interactions rather than individuals, I will take this opportunity to describe the qualities of group members in order to give the reader a sense of each group.

Southern Academic Health System. Southern is a competitive, upper-tier academic health care center that is affiliated with an elite, public university. As the leading employer in the region, the health system employs doctors, nurses, nursing assistants, administrators, and a large support staff. These roles are strongly segregated by class and gender (Clawson and Gerstel 2014). In this project, I focused on young medical professionals, including advanced medical students who are completing clinical rotations, medical residents, post-residency fellows, and those in their first years of post-training employment. Amongst those on the medicine track, there are almost equal numbers of men and women from a range of ethnic backgrounds. Under the shroud of professionalism and meritocracy, the children of the upper-middle class or higher uphold the latently patriarchal, classist, and racist culture of medicine (cf. Ariss 2009; Bosk 1979; Goffman 1961a; Peck and Conner 2011). Yet, there is ever-increasing pressure to conduct oneself in a culturally sensitive manner (Good et al. 2011).

The public hospital is a formal work context where the presentation of competence, professionalism, and skilled practice of one's craft are highly valued.[16] It is characterized by a division of labor and institutionalized hierarchy (Bosk 1979; Clawson and Gerstel 2014), though the structure of this is moving away from absolute, individual authority (e.g., Helmreich and Merritt 2001). In such a large bureaucracy, each person has narrowly defined responsibilities (Parsons 1951). Because it is an academic health care center, medical student training is incorporated into the day-to-day activities of most departments.

[16] The culture and occupational culture of this elite, public hospital likely differs in many meaningful ways from those found in private, Catholic, or other public hospitals that are smaller, rural, and lower-tier (Reich 2014).

Those training to become physicians begin their rotations in the liminal role of having highly specialized training and very little clinical experience. Young medical students climb this hierarchy from the bottom. Bringing textbook knowledge to their clinical rotations, they must balance the role of aspiring physician with the reality that most everyone in the hospital has more experience with practical patient care than they do, including most nurses. As they work their way up to occupy roles of increasing responsibility, maintaining a front of professionalism, knowledgeability, and competence is of the utmost importance, even when these qualities are lacking. This front of competence is projected for patients, coworkers, and others—to everyone outside of one's trusted community of sympathy and coping.

The doctors and the doctors-in-training that I spoke with enter the field for professional and financial success in their lives, though many also understand medicine as a vehicle for public service and helping the needy. Most who make it into medical school at elite academic health systems are accustomed to being at the top of their classes. These are academic achievers whose parents have high expectations for success in prestigious careers. Medical students, residents, and physicians in this elite health system are not just over-achievers compared to the average American, but to the average American medical student. As there can only be a small percentage of relative "winners," their time at Southern is highly stressful and emotionally trying.

For most students, the stress of delivering patient care does not compare to the stress of feeling that one is competing against other "type-A, overachieving, hyper-competitive type people," as described by one medical student. Back-stage decompression and a social support network help those training for a career in medicine to keep pushing through their day-to-day routines. Behind closed doors, at a coffee break, or at a post-shift happy hour, young physicians vent to a trusted group of peers about the stresses over relative advancement, difficulties in

training, challenging patients, and demanding superiors. These niches of social support are the exception to a broader, competitive culture. The dominant culture is one that pushes for achievement relative to one's cohort, colleagues, and field.

Monacan Volunteer Fire Department. Monacan Volunteer Fire Department is a volunteer fire department that was founded in the mid-1970s to provide fire protection and emergency medical services to a rapidly developing portion of a suburbanizing county. Running well in excess of two thousand calls a year, it is one of the busier volunteer fire companies on the East Coast. Monacan serves a commercial and suburban area; it is located on the outskirts of a city with an expanding population that is leading to rapid urbanization of its response area. Due to an expanding population, the county has begun to provide paid firefighters to ensure service for its residents. Political tensions are high in the local fire service as the ever-expanding career staffing makes inroads into volunteer departments, such as Monacan. At the time of this research, career firefighters staff the station from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Volunteers staff the station on nights, weekends, and holidays.

In the shadow of these political battles, sixty active volunteers—half are in their twenties and about 85 percent are men—come in to run alarms. On any given shift, between six and fourteen firefighters train and socialize to pass the time between alarms. There is collective energy surrounding hope for "the big one." No one wants someone to get hurt or lose a home; but if there's going to be a fire, they want to be the one crawling in the burning building to extinguish it.

Monacan has a distinct working-class white culture at its core, like most fire companies across America (cf. Desmond 2007; Smith 1972). Most of the members are Republican, pick-up-truck-driving, tobacco-dipping, "proud to be an American" types, but about a third of the

membership has ties to a local university. Despite these class and education differences, Monacan is built around a strong "brotherhood." Everyone eats together, sleeps in the same station, and fights fire together. Thus, people from very different walks of life come together and take pride in their common affiliation with Monacan. Monacan is an alloy of American, Southern, and fire service cultures, but its diverse membership makes it a bit more progressive than most departments.

People join the fire service for a number of reasons: "It's something I always wanted to do it since I was a little kid;" "I'm here because I love the rush, the lights, and sirens;" "I wanted to volunteer, but I didn't want to do something like feed soup to the homeless. I wanted to do something skilled." Many of these reasons persist, but long-term members report staying for the brotherhood: "The people I've met here. That's why I'm here;" "A night away from the wife, free dinner, hanging out, talking guy talk, and riding a fire truck with the boys; that's a no brainer;" or, more sentimentally, "Wherever you go and whatever you do, there's always a bond you share with the guys you fought fire and rode the rig with." A few find appeal in moving up the ladder to become chiefs, because they like the power and authority. However, the appeal for most comes from riding the engines with those who share a similar worldview.

Firefighting has a culture of "brotherhood." This culture of belonging is reinforced by encounters with qualities that bind participants: searching a burning residence for victims, being on the interior fire attack team on a "structure fire," or spending late nights in the station socializing with one's crew. These encounters include shared hardship, intimacy, and interdependency that bind participants.

Alliance CrossFit. Alliance CrossFit is a for-profit gym focusing on collective interval training and Olympic weightlifting. More generally, CrossFit is an exercise philosophy and a

competitive sport that is practiced in the United States and abroad. The core of CrossFit consists of high-intensity interval training involving Olympic weightlifting, gymnastics, calisthenics, and other exercises that aim to: "best prepare trainees for any physical contingency" ("Forging Elite Fitness" 2014). Though CrossFit is a virtual and trans-local community (cf. Bennett and Peterson 2004), affiliate CrossFit "boxes" are the hubs of the CrossFit life. Alliance CrossFit is the local box where I did most of my fieldwork.

CrossFit purports to be for everybody; one journalist characterized it as a context where "Navy SEALs and pregnant Soccer Moms help each other get ripped" (Ferenstein 2011). However, most "boxes" have a very white, upper-middle-class culture. Though CrossFit excludes the expensive workout equipment of other gyms, membership is expensive, often exceeding $200 a month. Thus, as one critical review maintains, "CrossFit tends to attract an outsized proportion of intense power yuppies" (Nolan 2013). Alliance CrossFit is no exception. The majority of its CrossFitters are white, twenty- or thirty-somethings with college degrees, with many working toward or holding professional degrees.

Anywhere from two to five days a week, people come to CrossFit to complete a "WOD," or "workout of the day," and usually some strength training or skill work. At eight designated times each day, CrossFitters descend on the box to complete the WOD prescribed by the lead trainer. Patrons complete the workout "Rx," as prescribed, or adjust the weight, number of repetitions, or skill level of the movements. Though not everyone is completing exactly the same movements, a central quality of a CrossFit workout is that it is a collective activity. All workouts are completed as a collective unit, whether it consists of a set number of rounds, or "RFT," or involves an "AMRAP," where everyone completes as many rounds as possible. The workout is not over until everyone is finished; if not lying on the floor out of exhaustion, fellow CrossFitters

clap and cheer for those who have yet to get through their final movements. The collective pressure to better oneself and the positive group dynamic are the primary reasons CrossFitters report for their continued involvement in the gym.

CrossFit is a manufactured community, purposefully created by management and trainers, but financially supported and collectively upheld by everyday CrossFitters. Within the box, trainers encourage everyone to introduce themselves to everyone else. Everything is done in groups, teams, or pairs. Warm-ups consist of games, such as a variant of "musical medicine balls" or "sharks and minnows" involving a range of exercises (crab walk, broad jumps, "Spiderman lunges," etc.) or team warm-ups using an ergometer, in which one non-rower performs a movement while the other rows. Often workouts involve teams, building bonds of obligation; as one team member does not want to let down the other, both perform at a higher level.

In introductory classes, prospective CrossFitters are told, "CrossFit isn't a gym; it's a lifestyle." Those who become core members in CrossFit culture embody this statement. Many of those who are most deeply integrated attend up to five days a week; follow the televised "sport;" socialize primarily with other CrossFitters; eat a Paleolithic diet that avoids grains, dairy, processed sugar, and refined oils; and socially uphold the mystique and collective ideology of CrossFit. These veteran CrossFitters profess that CrossFit is the optimal fitness regimen and lifestyle. These deeply invested members live CrossFit as a lifestyle.

Though manufactured organizationally and paid for by the individual members, CrossFit becomes a community and a social home for many of its members. Through Workouts of the Day that forge community through shared hardship and intimacy toward a common goal of corporeal excellence, CrossFit is a source of identity and a site of belonging for its patrons.

Research Methods

This research examines how cultural architectures and properties of encounters yield belonging and inequality in face-to-face encounters. I used participant observation and interviews to collect data on encounters amongst firefighters, physicians, and CrossFitters. In positivist terminology, I examined how variations in culture and qualities of encounters yield belongings and inequalities. I then utilized my findings to extend contemporary sociological theory.

Early conceptualizations of this project began with an interest in understanding how inequality emerges in face-to-face encounters. I was hoping to combine an earlier focus on individuals' pursuits of relative advancement (Scarborough 2009, 2012, 2015) with a focus on how interaction itself is consequential for the outcome of interactions (Scarborough 2013). Exploratory ethnographic observations led me to the conclusion that I could not develop a model of inequality without a foundation of belonging. Thus, my final research design focused on both belonging and inequality.

I relied on two kinds of data: encounters and individual narratives. Because social behavior always involves a reciprocal relationship between social environments and individuals (Howard and Hollander 2000), triangulation of participant observations and interviews allowed for me to develop a more accurate picture of the factors that lead to belonging and inequality (Downward and Mearman 2007; Golafshani 2003; Whyte 1997:73-76). Participant observation yielded insight into the action and processes that are inherent to solidarity, community, and advancement processes. Interview data allowed my participants to speak for themselves and share narratives outlining their involvement in these contexts. However, these narratives often neglected social dynamics that interviewees either could not recall or did not consider in their

phenomenological accounts. Drawing upon both ethnography and interviews allowed me to develop a clear understanding of these three social worlds.

My examination of ethnographic and interview data involved in-depth, qualitative analysis. Though I began with an interest in understanding belonging and inequality, I utilized a grounded theory methodology (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1998; Charmaz 2006) to identify the contextual and personal factors that generate belonging and inequality. Below I outline my approach to participant observation and interviewing.

Participant Observation

My primary data for the dissertation came from participant observation. Rather than focusing on individuals, I focused on encounters as my unit of analysis (cf. Fiske and Markus 2012; Goffman 1967; Jiménez, Fields, and Schachter 2015; Ross and Nisbett [1991] 2011; Scott 2011; Vela-McConnell 2011; Weenink 2015). Documenting CrossFitters doing a workout, medical students attempting to impress an attending physician, and firefighters responding to an alarm are examples of routine encounters where I observed belonging and inequality processes.

To document encounters, I spent 4000 hours in the field amongst the three groups. Between September 2012 and May 2015, my observations of each site went through three stages. First, I acquired access, became integrated, and gained familiarity with each social world. Second, I completed a focused ethnography where I documented all aspects of encounters. This could be characterized as "enactive ethnography" (Wacquant 2015), as I attempted to take an active role in the interaction of the context to understand the cognitive and embodied experiences of those in these social worlds. Finally, I spent supplemental time in each field site to note exemplary and exceptional circumstances that allowed me to refine nascent hypotheses. These experiences culminated in 500,000 words of field notes.

The first context that I began studying was Monacan Volunteer Fire Department. I began as a participant observer, completed the requisite classes to be "released" as a firefighter, and then spent almost two years as a fully functioning member of the volunteer fire company. I not only spent time training, responding to routine calls, and fighting fire, but I also socialized at picnics and bars with other volunteer firefighters. I fully integrated into this context, fulfilling duties as a firefighter, training new members, and serving in a command capacity.

The second context where I conducted fieldwork was Southern Academic Health System, where I focused my attention on those pursuing a career in medicine. To study a medical health system, I initially spent time making general observations in the emergency, internal medicine, and psychiatric departments of the hospital. These observations offered me an introduction to the workings of the hospital. I also shadowed physicians and spent time observing informal social groups. Shadowing gave me the opportunity to be exposed to many monologues about "how things *really* are in medicine." Informal interactions, such as happy hours, dinner parties, and participation in social events such as the MFL league (Medical Football League) allowed access to the "back stage" of medicine, which I found difficult to access in formal contexts due to the front of professionalism that is common in the field (Goffman 1959). In this setting, I compensated for my nonparticipant status by developing bonds with a few key informants and asking more questions about the experiences of people I was researching.[17]

[17] Compared to the participant observation in the other contexts, my immersion in the health care context could be described as "short-term ethnography" (Pink and Morgan 2013), as this context required specialist training and the apprenticeship method would require a long-term commitment. I compensated for my outsider status by supplementing observations with questioning of their embodied experience, what was important to them, and their reasoning of how they negotiated particular encounters. I attempted to remain sensitive to their embodied practices, sensations, and emotions. I was able to have deep and intense research encounters with these participants because of their loose understanding of social science research. This understanding yielded a familiarity and comfort level, which in some cases led to an over-sharing of intimate details that was more befitting of a therapist/patient interaction than a research researcher/subject interaction. This allowed me to develop an understanding of how they navigated their daily routines and to understand their phenomenological experience of encounters.

The third context that I studied was a CrossFit gym. After joining the gym, I completed introductory and "ramp up" classes where I learned fundamental Olympic weightlifting movements. Next, I progressed to attending regular CrossFit classes.[18] I arrived early before each workout to observe informal conversations, completed the daily "WOD," and stayed after to observe interactions of people reflecting on their workout experience. I also attended and observed interactions in informal and formal cookouts, bar crawls, and social gatherings. During my two-year tenure at Alliance CrossFit, I transitioned from a relative outsider with mediocre cardiovascular ability to an above-average patron, capable of lifting more weight and finishing workouts more quickly than most others.

In my participant observation at all three sites, I collected data on social interactions in an effort to understand these social worlds. In particular, I was attentive to rituals, ceremonies, contests, and everyday interactional incidents that bring people together or hierarchically segregate participants (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, and Lofland 2006). Such a focus included being attentive to the patterned meanings, expectations, standards, and values that social actors bring to their social world. I paid particular attention to how practices, processes, and contexts bring people together and provide a mechanism for generating belonging or inequality. This included noting the number and characteristics of persons present, the purpose or function of the interaction, the ritualistic qualities of interaction, and its emotional tone, including the level of excitement generated by the interaction.

I remained attentive for "breaches of inclusion"—gaffes that jeopardize membership and hierarchy in a group. Such breaches of inclusion included cultural foibles, such as deploying the "wrong" capital for an interaction (cf. Lee 2009; Scarborough 2012) or violating a shared "group

[18] "Ramp up" classes were renamed "essentials" classes during my tenure at the gym. These are distinct from the introductory classes offered to potential clients who come to the gym for the first time.

style" (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003), which, even if only temporarily, bestows "outsider" status on the violator (Becker [1963] 1973). Each experience was contextualized in relation to environmental characteristics of the context, including the atmosphere, location, scene, and involvement of physical objects in the setting. Though rooted in the contexts of a fire station, gym, or hospital, encounters were observed in a range of contexts. These encounters included ceremonies, work-related events, classroom training, fraternizing, picnics, dinners, and parties. A complete list of items that I attended to in my ethnographic fieldwork can be found in "Appendix A: Observation Checklist."

In the field, I made "jottings" as allowed by the situation (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011). In certain contexts, it was appropriate to take notes in real time as an interaction occurred. At other times, the prevalence of constant smartphone usage allowed me to take note of key phrases in real-time, utilizing the "notes" feature on my mobile phone. At other times, I disappeared to the restroom to take notes on interactions that did not allow for real-time jottings. Upon exiting the field site for the day, I combined all of these methods of data collection to produce detailed field notes that provided a record of what had transpired.

I attempted to minimize my effect on the social world around me. Though ethnographic fieldwork is an essentially human activity that cannot be divorced from the selfhood of the ethnographer (Coffey 1999), I remained cognizant of my actions and conducted myself in a manner that would limit the consequences of my involvement. As a college-educated, white male in my late twenties to early thirties, I fit in demographically in all three contexts. Only amongst the firefighters was I significantly more educated than most. In an effort to blend in, I adopted

the clothing and adjusted my language use for each context.[19] When interpreting the actions of others, I also tried to move beyond my own worldview to understand the experiences of others. Throughout my fieldwork, I attempted to note my effects on each context. I also remained attentive for negative cases that contradicted my tentative hypotheses and aimed to understand the complexity of conditions and interaction effects that shaped the social behaviors of people in each context.

Virtual ethnography of social media and websites offered insight into the shared values of the trans-local communities that I studied. I used this data to provide cultural context for analysis of my ethnographic and interview data. As there are significant pitfalls and challenges to ethnographic research of computer-mediated communication (Garcia et al. 2009), I only used this data to expose myself to themes and perspectives that I could look for in the field and discuss in interviews.

Webpages of national organizations and popular blogs of cultural entrepreneurs in each field offered insight into values of those beyond my field sites. These allowed understanding of trans-local systems of meaning that extend beyond physically bound contexts. As I integrated into the social network of each of my field sites, I found myself receiving friend requests on Facebook and smartphone apps, such as Snapchat. In many cases, captions of photos and links provided insight into the values of those in the field. I documented activity through these media as I would actions that I observed in the field, which further informed future data collection.

Extensive working knowledge of the cultures, membership categories, and technical know-how allowed me to make judicious assessments of behaviors in these contexts. The extensive time in the field allowed me to contextualize my findings within the social class,

[19] My goal was to temper my effect on these environments. Walking into the firehouse with wingtip Oxfords or into a medical resident happy hour with a printed T-shirt attracted attention that changed the dynamic of the context. In the fire service, I was accused of using "five-dollar words," so I adjusted my vocabulary to blend in.

institutional, departmental, and peer cultures of each group. Pairing my acclimation to these social worlds with insights from my interview data, I became better equipped to understand how culture functioned in these environments. Looking beyond "the exotic and weird" elements of these contexts, I attended to the "daily and taken-for-granted" elements (Luker 2008:156) in an effort to "conceptually order" (Strauss and Corbin 1998:19-21) how encounters and meaning systems facilitate belonging and distinction processes. My goal was to describe and detail the lives of people who inhabited three social worlds with an accuracy and cultural sensitivity honed by detailed observation and prolonged first-hand experience.

Interviews

After becoming acquainted with each field site, becoming sensitive to the group culture, and building trust with field site participants (Whyte 1997:25), I conducted interviews during the final portion of my fieldwork in each setting. These interviews were intended to provide a nuanced perspective on how field site participants understand pursuits of belonging and advancement in their social worlds.

Luker (2008:109) asserts that one should "let theory tell you how to sample." Following this prescription, I engaged in "theoretical sampling" of interviewees (Strauss and Corbin 1998) that allowed me to "maximize opportunities to discover variations among concepts and to densify categories in terms of their properties and dimensions" (Strauss and Corbin 1998:201). I focused on varying interviewees by class, length of involvement, and depth of integration in each context; but I also sought variation in race and gender. Additionally, I collected information on demographics, employment, and extra-organizational activities. The form used to gather this data can be found in "Appendix B: Pre-Interview Information Sheet."

Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 150 minutes. I recorded these with a digital recorder in one-on-one meetings in the homes of interviewees, my home, coffee shops, my office, their place of employment, the fire station, and the office of the CrossFit gym. These recorded accounts were later transcribed by me and a research assistant into a text document that could be analyzed. The total of 45 interviews, averaging about 8000 words per interview, culminated in more than 350,000 words of text.

I probed interviewees on topics concerning belonging and inequality. Allowing the interview to flow like "an inquisitive conversation" (Luker 2008:169), I focused on certain themes (Whyte 1997:25) rather than a fixed set of questions. Themes of interviews varied based on the volubility of the interviewee and the tangents of the interview. However, there was a general structure to interviews. I asked participants to share a truncated biography detailing how they came to participate in the field site, their present manner of involvement in the group, and their understandings of their own involvement. I asked interviewees to recount their favorite and most challenging situations over the course of their involvement in the organization. I inquired on topics such as how one fits in, how one makes a name for oneself, and the criteria for success. I also pressed the interviewees to identify formal and informal groups or cliques and explored the notions of stratification and conflict in the organization. I asked about outsiders and those who did not fit in. I also asked interviewees to offer accounts of how their understanding of the organization has changed over time and how they thought their organization differed from others. When possible, I asked interviewees about incidents that I witnessed in the field. Rather than relying on opinions of interviewees, I pressed for supporting accounts to ground their opinions in events from the context. A full list of potential questions and topics that I discussed with interviewees can be found in "Appendix C: Interview Schedule."

Most interviewees were very receptive to my research. Most of the physicians and CrossFitters came to the interviews with a basic understanding of social science research, which allowed them to speak openly and articulately about their experiences and perceptions of others. While many of the firefighters were not as eloquent in interviews, my deep involvement in the organization had earned their trust. The bonds that I made with firefighters facilitated honest accounts of their own failings and how they perceived their peers.

This does not mean that I did not face challenges. A subset of those interviewed was hesitant to make critical comments about peers or their organizations. Others engaged in excessive boasting or offered a carefully crafted narrative of personal excellence that glossed over the complexity of their opinions and failed to focus on their perceptions of the organization. To overcome these shortcomings, I would remind interviewees of the confidentiality of their accounts, the spirit of the project, and direct them to root their responses in accounts of actual encounters that they could recall.

The interviews offered a wealth of information that broadened my understanding of each context. As a full participant at Alliance CrossFit and Monacan Fire, I was able to explore a variety of perspectives on these organizations through interviews. Due to my comparatively peripheral involvement in the world of medicine, the interviews with physicians were central to bolstering my understanding of their social world. These interviews also informed my ethnographic fieldwork by both broadening my perspective to new areas of interest and highlighting processes that required more detailed attention.

Coding and Analysis

I employed a process of coding, memoing, and data analysis to examine the 850,000 words of ethnographic field notes and transcribed interviews. I applied the inductive logic of

grounded theory in my analysis of this text to identify characteristics and social processes associated with belonging and inequality (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1998; Charmaz 2006). The primary objective of this research was to examine how culture and properties of encounters yield belonging and inequality amongst firefighters, CrossFitters, and physicians. In addition to this culturally sensitive description of each specific context, I highlight how these cases facilitate an understanding of belonging and inequality processes more generally. While I do not attempt to generate formal "theoretical statements" (Stinchcombe [1968] 1987), I aimed to use these cases as "clarifying depictions" (Goffman 1974:15) of these processes. I show how these dimensions of collective activity might operate in other contexts, perhaps in an altered form (Lu 2015:147).

To analyze the textual accounts of my ethnographic fieldwork and interviews, I adopted an open coding procedure to locate cultural processes of belonging and inequality. Beginning with an "emergent or experimental posture" (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, and Lofland 2006:190), I coded for processes and properties of encounters that correspond with belonging and inequality. My focus was to identify emergent patterns, emphases, and themes with a progressive tailoring around a focused set of interests (Altheide 1996; Chambliss and Schutt 2013; Strauss and Corbin 1998). As my coding advanced, I revised my codes and moved toward ordering the frequency of various types of interaction in each field. My final categorization scheme emerged inductively from my textual analysis of my field data. I did not "quantify" in an absolute sense, but aimed to gauge the relative frequency of processes in each context. My goal was to examine how these processes varied across contexts, along with the situational and cultural conditions that yield particular types of behavior. Though I focused on identifying cultural features and interactional conditions that yield these outcomes, I also coded for "dispositional" or "psychological" factors

that influenced the behavior of people in these contexts (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, and Lofland 2006), though I do not feature these prominently in my findings.

Throughout the research process, I sought out "negative cases" (Blumer 1969) that forced me to qualify any hypotheses that I developed. I also attempted to understand how certain processes only worked under certain conditions (e.g., the presence of an outsider). Alternatively, I attempted to account for "interaction effects" (Stinchcombe [1968] 1987:45-47), in which I considered the scenario that when x process is occurring, belonging or inequality occur, but when y process is introduced to the encounter, the outcome changes.

Consistent with the scholarship of Hochschild (1994), Pugh (2009), and Thorne (1993), among others, I focused my attention on instances where belonging or inequality appeared highly salient in conversation or practice. Hochschild (1994) refers to these instances as "magnified moments," defining them as "episodes of heightened importance, either epiphanies, moments of intense glee of unusual insight, or moments in which things go intensely but meaningfully wrong. In either case, the moment stands out; it is metaphorically rich, unusually elaborate and often echoes" (Hochschild 1994:4). These "magnified moments" presented an opportunity to examine and highlight the significance of events that may take place quickly or rarely in the field, but meaningfully illuminate aspects of social reality that are often taken for granted or overlooked. My analysis attended to these moments in both my participant observation and interviews. Several of these are featured in the opening vignettes at the outset of each empirical chapter of the dissertation.

I used memos to move from coded data to conceptualized relationships and generating "relational statements" about the conditions that generate inequality (Luker 2008; Strauss and Corbin 1998). Memos were an opportunity to think broadly about a wide range of topics and

engage with the data in unconventional ways. The process of memoing allowed me to explore concepts and constantly recurring themes and ideas. This also allowed me to explore how these cases might speak empirically to other cases (Small 2009). In addition, memoing helped me relate my findings to existing theory and contemporary social issues. At all times, I attempted to contextualize these accounts within the wider political, economic, historical, and cultural contexts (cf. Marcus 1998).

Methodological Contribution of a Sociology of Encounters

This research is a sociology of encounters. Instead of individuals, the primary unit of analysis is the encounter. An analysis of encounters is a methodological perspective that privileges the social over the individual. Compared to traditional ethnographic and interview methods, a sociology of encounters provides a focused lens for studying the action of social life. As a complement to other approaches, I argue that this methodological approach facilitates a distinctly sociological approach to researching and understanding human behavior.

Privileging encounters offers a perspective on social life that foregrounds interaction itself. Traditional qualitative sociology falls into one of two camps. Most of those who do ethnography focus on mapping individual lines of action rather than mapping the characteristics of the interaction. As part of their efforts to describe a social world, these ethnographers are attempting to understand the phenomenology of those inhabiting a social world. This amounts to a social psychology of sorts. On the other hand, those who rely primarily on interviews are even further distanced from the action. Interviews provide access to front-stage presentations of recollections of phenomenological experiences. These perspectives allow great insight into the experiences of individuals (cf. Pugh 2013), but a sociology of encounters allows direct access to the action of social life. Instead of studying rehashed accounts of fighting fire, workouts in the

gym, and interactions with patients, I studied fighting fire, working out, and caring for patients. A focus on encounters allows sociologists to study the action of social life.

A sociology of encounters focuses on the action that transpires in face-to-face encounters, such as the emergence of belonging or inequality. Encounters are the arenas where social interaction actually transpires, including many inclusion or exclusion processes. I argue that a focus on encounters comprises a distinctly sociological understanding of human behavior that is less removed from the social than other methodological approaches.

In the chapters that follow, I outline the cultural architectures and interactional ecologies of belonging and inequality. Chapters three and four focus on belonging, while chapters five and six deal with inequality.

Chapter 3. The Cultural Architecture of Belonging

Culture plays a part in situational belongings, but it is axiomatic to the development of sustained belongings. Situational belongings emerge around common material and embodied culture. In some instances of connection, shared culture is even produced by those in the encounter. The repetition of encounters possessing these conditions can result in sustained belonging over time. Yet, most instances of sustained belongings are the product of institutional cultural infrastructures and grassroots cultural practices. Grassroots practices are the collective product of those constituting the interaction, while institutional infrastructures formally dictate or latently structure those navigating an encounter. Compared to institutional rituals, the emotionally-charged meanings associated with grassroots practices are more likely to result in deep sustained belongings. The cultural qualities of these emotionally charged encounters—such as common group style, definition of the situation, superstitions, and legends—allow those constituting encounters to produce durable connections. Conclusively, sustained belongings are most likely to develop when institutional cultural infrastructures and grassroots cultural practices are homologous.

Introduction

A group of twenty volunteer firefighter cadets gather at an external training facility on a blustery thirty-five degree evening for a hands-on practical for Firefighter I Academy. The cadets are a disparate group consisting of seventeen men and three women, mostly in their twenties. The cadets come from a variety of backgrounds: unskilled and skilled blue-collar laborers born and raised in the area, an ex-Marine with a Purple Heart, a few university students from more privileged backgrounds, an ex-firefighter from London with over twenty years of experience, a real estate agent, and a stay-at-home mom. The subject of the practical exercise is loss prevention, salvage, and overhaul—how to limit property damage during and after a fire. After reviewing state-mandated exercises on folding and deploying "salvage covers," everyone is ready for the main event—using door chalks to stop the flow of water from an overhead sprinkler.[20]

[20] "Door chalks" or "sprinkler chalks" are pieces of wood or plastic in the shape of a wedge. Carried by most firefighters, these can prop open a door and, if two are used together, can be pressed into an activated sprinkler head to shut off or drastically reduce the flow of water.

The instructors build up the hardship of chalking the sprinklers. One threatens: “Y’all think you got wet earlier. You haven’t gotten wet yet. Wait ‘til later. When you get up under them sprinklers y’all are going to have that thirty degree water running down ya arms. Y’all gonna be good and wet then.” As we head into the second floor of the training facility, another instructor jokes: “Yeah, you won’t be able to see shit. You gotta know what you’re doing, cause you won’t see nothin’ once that water starts flowing and spraying all over the place, so you better know what you’re doing.” Echoing these sentiments, Lead Instructor Shiflett echoes these comments: “I hope y’all are ready to get wet. If I don’t see you all moving with a purpose, I’m gonna make you all stand under those sprinklers all night.” The mood is set by the instructors who emphasize the impending shock and challenge of the event, especially on a cold evening such as this one.

Everyone is divided into two battalions and assigned to a sprinkler head in different rooms. Inside a room lit only by a dim work lamp on an extension cord, all of us in Battalion II crouch on one knee as the instructor describes and performs a “dry run” demonstration of chalking a sprinkler head. He stresses: “It looks easy, but I tell you what, when that pressure gets up there, y’all are gonna have to work to get-r-done.” Each cadet is to approach the activated sprinkler head, climb atop a stack of wood pallets, reach above their heads, and force two door chalks into the activated sprinkler to drastically reduce the flow of water.

I am the first of Battalion II to attempt the process. Standing atop the pallets, my helmet and the outer shell of my gear sheds the water from overhead, but the cold water soon runs down my sleeves, soaking my clothing underneath. My first try is challenging, taking about forty seconds to force in the chalks due to the high water pressure. By the time I am done, my boots are filled with water, and I am drenched to my underwear, shocked by the frigid temperature.

I remove the chalks and pass them to the next cadet. I am rewarded with a slap on the back from a peer, while another comments, “Good job, man.” Everyone takes their turn. Some cadets shout as they are exposed to the water. Each individual is under the flow of thirty-something degree water for a minute or less. The instructor continues to yell at the cadets: “If you don’t like getting wet, then the fire service isn’t for you. You better get used to it boys. You’re gonna to get wet.” Learning this practical skill in this quasi-hazing encounter is understood to be a rite of passage.

Each person must remain under the sprinkler until the chalks have been muscled into place. Some take significantly longer than others, generating comments from the crowd: “What’s wrong? Can’t find the hole?”; “Make sure to scrub behind your ears.” This crass, jocular humor is pervasive amongst fire volunteers, but as each person successfully cycles through the station, they receive praise from their peers and slaps on their back. Despite it being late in the evening, the cadets are riled up by the jarring experience. After everyone has completed the task, the instructor goads us on: “Nobody told y’all to stop; keep going!”

As each person cycles through the exercise, one after the other, the energy of the moment builds. As the cadets become proficient at chalking the sprinklers, most in Battalion II begin getting visibly excited, as demonstrated by brotherly punches, high fives, and the like. This is accompanied with a soundtrack of adolescent jeering: “Chalk that shit.” “Woooo!,” “That water don’t bother me!,” “Oh, yeah,” “Fuck, yes.,” and “I got that shit!” The cadets of Battalion II are soaking wet, cold, and physically taxed by a long evening of training in the cold, yet everyone is animated, smiling, and yelling. Instead of sulking at being soaking wet on a near freezing evening, there is a feeling of togetherness produced by the experience.

After multiple rounds of chalking, the exercise concludes and it is time to clean up. With the exception of two cadets who had the foresight to bring a change of clothing, each person assists with clean-up in their soaking wet bunker gear. The hose lines, the junction box, pallets, lights, and other training supplies are packed away in what feels like record time. Due to being energized and soaking wet in thirty-five degree weather, everyone "moves with a purpose" to get things packed away so the group can load on the departing bus.

There is a charged energy to the interaction on the bus. Invigorated by the training and the satisfaction of ending the evening, several of the cadets begin shouting out into the darkness of the bus. About eight of the cadets begin an impromptu call and response session: joking or trivial statements are yelled and followed with the phrase "oh yeah" and are then collectively succeeded with a greatly emphasized and elongated "oh yeeeah," a phrasing that might pay homage to professional wrestler "Macho Man" Randy Savage.

> Cadet Williams: "Chalked those sprinklers, oh yeah."
> Collective: "Oh yeeeah."
> Cadet Black: "Bus ain't makin' it up the hill, oh yeah."
> Collective: "Oh yeeeah."

After a few rounds, Cadet Wright yells out, "Carrie [Roberts] says she's wet, oh yeah." Everyone on the bus laughs and responds, "Oh yeeeah!" In response to this antiphony, Cadet Roberts showers the contents of her water bottle onto Wright, but her mannerisms and smile outwardly suggest that she is not upset. Cadet Roberts does not balk at the remark; she does her part to keep the encounter going with a playful response of discontent as opposed to a defense of her dignity. To navigate the crass, working-class, and traditional culture of the fire service, these sorts of compromises are necessary, particularly for those at the margins due to race, class, or gender to find community. Cadet Wright responds with a collected coolness, "I'm already wet." Another

male Cadet repeats the statement at a yell, “She’s already wet, oh yeah.” The group again follows with a synchronized “Oh, yeeeah!”

With each joking comment, the mood elevates and people laugh and contribute to the next round more whole-heartedly (cf. Collins 2004a). Several people take unordered turns calling out. As the instructor gets on the bus, Cadet Williams yells out, “The bus driver looks like Chris Farley, oh yeah!” Everyone laughs and offers another collective, “Oh yeeeah.” The bus is exploding with energy. In the charge of the moment when no fresh comment is offered, someone shouts the phrase, “Oh yeah,” which is again followed by the ritualistic, group response.

As the bus embarks the training center, several cadets start singing, “Wheels on the Bus.” Most everyone is smiling, laughing, and jeering as the entire bus collectively goes through several verses of the song: “wheels go round and round,” “wipers on the bus go swoosh, swoosh, swoosh.” Next, the unique phrase of the verse switches to an inside joke harassing Cadet Roberts, “All the Carrie’s on the bus go wah, wah, wah.” People laugh louder than ever. Finally, the appointed Lieutenant of Battalion I yells: “All the LT’s on the bus say shut the hell up.” Everyone repeats this and, after a few seconds of silence, bursts into laughter. Cadet Hasselhoff replies: “I guess it worked. Everybody shut the hell up.” Despite being soaking wet and in foul-smelling bunker gear, there is an effervescent quality to the training and return trip.

This encounter demonstrates an instance of situational belonging emerging from grassroots interaction. In encounters, people bond over culture by activating systems of shared meanings from their institutional involvements, and in doing so, sometimes create culture in the moment.

The opening vignette offers a glimpse at how sustained belonging, or community, relies on culture. These cadets are mobilizing their embodied cultures in these encounters. A web of

American, Southern, working class, male, and fire service cultures are all in play. Each of these institutions has its own culture. But in this encounter, the cadets also share common contextual objectives, a group style (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003), a common definition of the situation (Thomas and Thomas 1928), and they bond through the idiosyncratic call and response. Belonging results from participating in the institutional culture and the grassroots cultural practices of the collective. There is situational belonging in the moment and groundwork is laid for sustained belongings in encounters like this one.

The cadets are internalizing a skill—acquiring culture—that is valued in the fire service, rural, Southern, and working-class cultures. Using one's body to accomplish a task reflects embodied cultural values of firefighters and generates belonging amongst the group. The process of acquiring and internalizing this valued, insider knowledge binds everyone in the moment and to a lineage and network of firefighters who share this skill. Everyone under the sprinkler head shares a common goal—learning how to complete the skill. This common objective creates a coalition in the moment. In addition, the call and response is a fresh implementation of an existing cultural form that is produced in the interaction and is binding in the moment. This cultural idiosyncrasy of the group is a vehicle for situational belonging.

Institutional regulations are the formal organizational culture that structures the behavior of cadets in the training. Practical objectives are outlined and rules limit extraneous or inappropriate behavior to guide the interactions of these new firefighters into patterns of behavior and bodily management that are appropriate for the fire service. Though they are only cadets, these firefighters uphold the crass group style of firefighters. Telling a joke and taking a joke reflect the group style of firehouse culture. To be part of the community, one needs to participate. To take a stand against the conventions of the group would risk alienation. The

cadets come from a variety of backgrounds, but in this encounter they draw upon the fire service's informal code of conduct and exchange crude, misogynistic jokes. Within the confines of this encounter, this is the interactional vehicle to achieve belonging.

This account shows fire cadets uniformly integrating into the fire service. This is one analytical lens that emphasizes the role of culture in belonging; it is one interpretation of a complex set of encounters to understand how situational and sustained belongings emerge. Cultural qualities of the encounter, inequality, individual personalities, and myriad other factors all play a role. Consequently, the group is a fresh batch of recruits into the intergenerational community of active and veteran firefighters, but also a collection of overlapping peer groups. These overlapping cliques of dyads and triads are culturally unique; they share their own group styles, definitions of the situation, superstitions, and legends. Thus, coalitions may also emerge in encounters around culture that is only relevant in the moment. For example, the heckling of Cadet Roberts by other cadets reflects a hyper-masculine peer group. These miniature coalitions of belonging are nested within larger institutional cultural frameworks, such as firefighting culture and class cultures.

In my exegesis of this example, I analyze the role of culture in the emergence of situational and sustained belonging. Situational belonging is an affinity or connection between or amongst those sharing an encounter. It is, in part, the product of embodied and material culture that is brought to encounters or created in the moment. On the other hand, sustained belonging, community that endures beyond the bounds of an encounter, has more complex cultural foundations. Institutional cultural infrastructure plays an important role in the durability of groups, but grassroots cultural practices, such as common group styles, definitions of the situation, superstitions, and legends, are at the core of sustained belongings.

This chapter highlights the role of culture—class, institutional, and group cultures—in belonging processes. Throughout this chapter, I discuss a tension between institutional cultural infrastructures that are imposed on those constituents negotiating encounters and grassroots cultural practices. I emphasize the bonding qualities of grassroots cultural practices and attempt to explicate the ways that culture is central to human connection. With an eye toward deconstructing the micro-social, I highlight the role of culture in specific moments of belonging. Beyond these fleeting flashes of belonging, I show how sustained belongings are built on shared culture.

In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss how culture is consequential for belongings. First, I introduce the cultures in my three field sites. Next, I discuss the role of culture in situational belongings and then show how cultural processes that transpire in face-to-face encounters can yield sustained belongings. I conclude with a discussion of how a focus on encounters, rather than individual psychologies, helps us to understand how belongings can be manifold.

Three Cultural Architectures of Belonging

In the opening vignette, I highlight the cultural architecture of situational belonging at Monacan Fire. Material culture, such as requiring matching uniforms and stringent facial hair restrictions, along with deeply engrained skillsets of embodied culture bind firefighters in the moment and over time. Monacan, like most fire departments, is full of members who are proud of their affiliation with the department and with the fire service. Around the firehouse, firefighters are bound by a group style of jocular humor that defines the space. Yet, the primary story in the fire service is one of sustained belonging, or "brotherhood." Motivation to serve the community, to socialize, and a desire for excitement are common values that unify the collective.

Firefighters are further bound by informal superstitions about the conditions that generate fire calls and legends of exemplary or calamitous events on the fireground. Traditions of honor, departmental pride, and the pervasive moral conception of brotherhood are also fixtures of the fire service. In American culture where taking a cool stance towards cultural products and groups is the norm (cf. Scarborough and McCoy forthcoming) and where our institutions are weakening (Putnam 2000), this sort of deep-seated investment in the group and celebration of the collective shows that pockets of meaningful community exist in neoliberal America.

Alliance CrossFit also shows how a cultural architecture produces a deep sense of belonging. Though situational belonging is largely due to the interactional ecology of the context, there is a strong cultural foundation that is central to the draw of CrossFit. A unique language, involving idiosyncratic words such as "WOD," "AMRAM," "Snatch," and "Kipping," marks membership. CrossFitters also bond by upholding a zany or fun group style that involves wearing themed costumes and working out to an upbeat soundtrack. CrossFit is purported to be for everyone, but there are very strict physical conventions. Insider status and meaningful membership requires strength, conditioning, and embodied skill at executing technical movements. In a context where one's performance creates an objective hierarchy of corporeal achievement, the cultural apparatus instead facilitates belonging and ameliorates emotionally-taxing infighting and individualistic pursuits. Formal rules encourage mentorship and connecting with others as equals, while also discouraging overt, individualistic boasting. Beyond the network at one's own CrossFit box, CrossFitters are affiliated with national and international

networks through active engagement with traditional and social media. Many CrossFitters across the world feel that they are involved in a social movement and way of life.[21]

In contrast, Southern Academic Health System is a formally stratified work environment that is markedly different from the other two. Yet, belongings can be found here as well. Pockets of situational belonging are common; institutional cultural infrastructure attempts to instill sustained belongings and grassroots cultural practices create pockets of deeply meaningful community. There are multiple administrative bodies that advocate for physicians, residents, and medical students to produce policy for the hospital. These bodies impose a web of cultural infrastructure that provides structure and attempts to create community. These regulations are further paired with the grassroots cultural practices of the physicians. Niches of meaningful belongings emerge out of work teams as healthcare workers share hardships of long hours, difficult patients, and challenges of various rotations. Another institutionalized cultural structure that forges bonds across hierarchy is the mentorship of residents and medical students. The grassroots practices of those in this context are also binding. Though it is often a latent concern in day-to-day routines, there is a shared definition of the situation and a common group style amongst most of those who pursue a career in medicine. Those in medicine also connect through a common valuation of the practice of medicine as an honorable pursuit. Donning the cultural apparatus of the white coat, taking part in the teamwork of providing patient care, and celebrating the success stories of recoveries and remissions gives incentive for deep investment in what is touted to be a career of public service.

[21] In particular, there is an annual "CrossFit Open" that has all CrossFitters around the world complete the same workouts on a regimented schedule ("The Open" 2015). This is meant to be a democratic moment of international connection, but also a screening process for institutionally sanctioned regional competitions.

Cultural Architecture of Situational Belongings

Culture plays a role in yielding situational belongings in face-to-face encounters. Situational belongings or momentary connections are often fleeting, but sometimes serve as the groundwork for sustained belongings that endure beyond the bounds of an interaction. The grassroots cultural practices of participants, on one hand, and institutional cultural infrastructures, on the other, contribute to the development of belongings in these encounters.

Institutional cultural infrastructures—such as fire department policies or CrossFit gym rules—are durable cultural structures, but these do not automatically result in situational belongings. Culture must be acknowledged, engaged, and activated in encounters to result in connection. Situational belongings are only likely to occur when this imposed culture is homologous with grassroots cultural practices.

People retain culture from their participation of social institutions, such as nationalities, social classes, institutional involvements, and social groups. People bring these acquired systems of shared meanings and practices to their encounters with various groups and institutions. Most instances of situational belonging that are rooted in culture involve bonding around material or embodied culture. Yet, not all culture is relevant in all encounters; connection only sometimes occurs around these cultural objects. These institutional or group cultures can facilitate situational belongings by activating existing culture, but it must be acknowledged and engaged by those who constitute encounters for connection to occur.

We can better understand the relationship between culture and situational belonging by drawing two distinctions. First, it is necessary to differentiate between common and shared culture. Common culture is comparable experience or knowledge, while shared culture is experienced or produced together. Common culture is binding, but shared culture yields

magnified belongings. Second, these grassroots cultural practices have two sources: they may draw on preexisting culture that is brought to the encounter or these may be created in the moment. I argue that most situational belonging emerges around the activation of existing culture, but powerful connections can develop through culture creation.

Activating Existing Culture

Institutional ties to nationality, religion, social class, institutional involvement, and peer groups all provide cultural stocks that can be activated to yield situational belonging in encounters. There is something sacred about shared culture. Material goods and displays of embodied culture serve as cultural lighthouses, or Durkheimian totems (Durkheim [1912] 1995), that steer people away from and guide people to groups where they belong.

Material culture items spark conversations that allow for bonding amongst those sharing an encounter. Entering a room, firefighters, CrossFitters, and physicians are drawn to displays of familiar culture. At Alliance CrossFit, there is no formal dress code, but items like the new model of CrossFit shoe, Reebok Nanos 4.0, or a shirt from a competition, such as SuperFit Richmond, allow people to connect. Standing around the waiting area of the gym prior to the beginning of a class, people often bond with one another over material culture: "Oh, you've got the new Nanos. How do you like 'em?" The material culture sparks a connection in the moment.

Material culture provides a mechanism of situational belongings in inter-group encounters and intra-institutional interactions. Firefighters can be divided into two camps based on their material culture displays: those prideful boot polishers and those seeking status through the display of dirty boots. The care of one's footwear is a contentious issue in the firehouse. Sitting around the firehouse, talking shop, and gossiping as firefighters do in their downtime between training and calls, the chief lectures a collection of eager listeners: "Man, some of these

guys walk around here with their boots all unzipped and covered in mud, it makes me sick. I mean, come on!" Several members echo his sentiment. An underlying value of, "having some pride," unifies this group. Meanwhile, while I was going through fire academy training, new firefighters would go to great lengths to acquire an authentic look. Boots were taken off and scuffed up. As one guy from another county told me while he cleaned charred wood out of the training building by kicking it with his boots: "Man, I gotta break these boots in. Nothing says 'new guy' like shiny black boots." This sparked a handful of followers to drop their shovels and start "breaking in" their own boots. Though individuals maintain their shoes for a variety of reasons, these pieces of material culture become beacons for those adopting like-minded cultural dispositions. In the hospital, make-up, jewelry, and footwear serve as similar cultural lighthouses. In CrossFit, clothing and shoes are the primary ways one can accessorize. Even within a unified institution, these minute cultural differences can become totems of identity and cultural sources of bonding.

Embodied cultural dispositions and practices underlie decisions to display or own material culture. These grassroots cultural practices are binding. Tobacco use amongst firefighters is an acquired taste and practice that yields situational belonging amongst users by activating social class, institutional affiliations, and peer group cultures.[22] Cigar smoking, the use of chewing tobacco and snuff dipping are staples of volunteer firefighting. As an aside in a

[22] Tobacco, caffeine, alcohol, and prescription drug usage vary amongst firefighters, CrossFitters, and physicians in ways that are patterned by class, age, gender, etc. Yet, the function is similar, though there are differences in the specific culture that is traded. For example, there are class differences in alcohol consumption. Bud Light and Fireball Cinnamon Whisky are preferences of working-class firefighters, while local wines and craft beers are preferred by upper-middle class CrossFitters and physicians. CrossFitters and physicians both engage in outings to wineries and breweries, but young physicians are more likely to practice post-fraternity binge drinking and CrossFitters are more likely to engage in limited alcohol consumption constrained by practices of home-brewing and connoisseurship. CrossFitters are more likely to bond over the accepted deviance of drinking an obscure IPA, while off-duty firefighters will order "a round of Fireball for firefighters." Culture has to be activated in an encounter to bring participants together. Tastes, preferences, and styles must be declared, performed, or displayed to become viable bases for situational belonging.

lecture for officer candidates, a state fire instructor and volunteer chief commented on tobacco use in his fire department:

> Dip, chewin' tobacco, whatever you wanna call it. I don't know what it is; some guys just can't fight fire without it. If you go to the glove-box on all of our apparatus, it's in there, Red Man Chewing Tobacco. I'm serious. These guys can't go into a burning building without the stuff.

In the classroom, everyone smiles, exchanges glances that show excitement, and a few chuckle because they all are aware of the celebrated role of tobacco in Southern, volunteer fire culture. Out of twelve students in the classroom, two have empty Mountain Dew bottles filled with dip spit in front of them at that moment. On the fireground, getting a cheek full of chewing tobacco before donning one's SCBA (Self Contained Breathing Apparatus), despite being unable to spit, is a culturally celebrated practice that brings people together in a stressful encounter. The grins shared in the classroom amount to a miniature celebration of its usage amongst the group.

Embodied cultural practices like dipping and smoking cigars are understood to be sources of pride and volunteer identity, as most career firefighters are bound by anti-tobacco usage policies. At an interpersonal or group level, those who "dip" label themselves by the practice against those who do not. Getting a buzz off of chewing tobacco together allows them to joke about the reliability of a "dip shit." More consequentially, it is a preference and practice that bonds "dippers," idealizes the freedom and pride of being a volunteer firefighter, and may be part of an anti-institutional working-class culture (cf. Bettie 2003; Willis 1977). Though a complex of class, institutional, and group cultures informs the decision to dip or smoke cigars, these embodied tastes and practices create bonds in the moment.

Beyond tastes and dispositions, possession of culture, such as specialized knowledge, can also bring people together momentarily. While I was in the field at the psychiatry department of Southern Health, I was let in on a secret regarding a clandestine relationship between two residents. It was a male resident, Dr. Padilla, who confided during privileged conversation,

"Catalina [the head resident] and I have been hanging out outside of work, but no one really knows about me and Catalina. It's fun to play professional at work." After this moment of sharing, I was "in the know." There were connections rooted in this privileged knowledge: between the two residents and between the male resident and me. The resident goes on to tell me, "I love seeing her at work. It's exciting, you know." Interactions amongst these two, totally professional on the face of the interaction, discussing a patient or selecting lunch, leaves them with a momentary emotional high from hiding their secret and maintaining a professional front. Once I was "in the know," their interactions in the hospital often elicited a secondary interaction with me, consisting of a wink, smile, or a raised eyebrow from the male resident. These gestures acknowledge the privileged information that is shared between ethnographer and subject. Not only does their secret create connection amongst the two residents, as Dr. Padilla's narrative reveals, but there is also rapport between us based on my insider knowledge of their relationship.

Privileged knowledge is a form of shared culture that can provide a basis for solidarity, but not all information has the same potential for facilitating communion. Secrets, purposefully constrained knowledge, are an even more charged form of culture that yields deep solidarity for those "in the know." Possessing privileged information can become "the sacred" (Durkheim [1912] 1995) of a situational religion that defines a coalition in the moment. Those with insider knowledge can be excited by its possession, which facilitates a feeling of belonging amongst participants. In sum, privileged knowledge is a form of culture that bonds those "in the know."

Material and embodied culture yields situational belongings that reflect nationality, social class, institutional involvement, and group or peer affiliations. Typically, webs of identifications are in play. Yet, these are only sometimes activated in encounters. Other cultural connections are produced in face-to-face encounters.

Grassroots Culture Creation

Most culture is brought intentionally and unintentionally by participants to encounters, but sometimes encounters involve the creation of fresh cultural forms. Our mental apparatus for comprehension, media of communication, and understandings act as toolkits for culture creation. Culture that is produced in an encounter is a powerful basis for connection as this is not merely common culture, but shared culture. When culture creation develops out of grassroots cultural practices in encounters, the structure of the culture is typically not complex in form.

Those constituting encounters often produce cultural idiosyncrasies that allow for situational belonging to emerge in interactions. At CrossFit, some workouts are designed for a two-person team. A "team" may choose to perform a WOD in any particular manner within the limitations of a workout. During a team workout, one team opted for a unique approach to complete the high volume sets of wall balls—a movement that takes a weighted medicine ball (often the twenty-pound variety) held at the chest throughout a below-horizontal squat, which upon extension of the squat is launched vertically to make contact with a ten-foot-high target. Whereas other teams chose to perform rotating sets of ten per person with a transition period, this team decided to complete one toss per person, exchanging the ball off of the wall between each individual's throw. This idiosyncrasy attracted attention from the trainer and others. When the trainer inquired, the outspoken member of the dyad replied between throws, "It's how we roll." This idiosyncratic cultural innovation is the defining cultural characteristic of the pair, which provides momentary identity and situational belonging.

A cultural idiosyncrasy, such as accomplishing a task in a particular way, is an implicit, cultural style of situational belonging that is produced in the encounter. Differing from "group style" (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003), a cultural idiosyncrasy is not a sustained code of cultural

conduct; it is produced in an encounter by the participants. A preexisting, structured pattern of interaction need not exist. Stacking boxes in a particular manner, collectively ordering fried food at dinner, or telling lewd jokes may seem trivial, but these are serious bases of cohesion in the moment. These are "triggering events" (Fine 2012) that register everyone's membership in the moment and also spawn new cultural content. Situational belonging develops around these impromptu cultural practices, which are the product of interactional work in encounters. On occasion, these extend beyond the encounter and come to define a group.

Contextualizing Situational Belongings

Material and embodied culture serve as lighthouses of connection within encounters. Yet, these situational belongings occur in a dynamic matrix of institutional and group affiliations. I have helped us to see how existing cultural affiliations provide a cultural mechanism for momentary connection and how the process of creating culture in the moment provides another path to connection. Now, I build upon this situational foundation to examine the cultural foundations of sustained belongings in encounters.

Cultural Architecture of Sustained Belongings

Sustained belongings are largely the result of cultural integration. While chains of encounters that bring people together can lead to enduring connections (Collins 2004a), many sustained belongings have complex cultural foundations. Sustained belongings—enduring feelings of identification and community—have a cultural architecture. Institutional cultural infrastructures can provide enduring and structured support for belongings, but these often are not composed of culture that is deeply meaningful for participants. Meanwhile, grassroots culture provides deeply meaningful culture, but is restricted to the network of an invested group.

It is these grassroots cultural practices that are cultural foundations of sustained belongings. These enduring forms of culture hold deep meaning for interactants and allow for the emergence of strong, meaningful sustained belongings. Of course, institutions and their own cultural apparatus also provide context for encounters. When this sort of institutional culture aligns with the grassroots practices of the group, it can intensify sustained belongings. In sum, grassroots cultural practices are the foundation of enduring sustained belongings as individuals negotiate encounters across various institutions.

Grassroots Cultural Practices

Sustained belongings are forged and upheld by grassroots cultural practices. Participating in common or shared cultural practices, including upholding a group style, holding a common definition of the situation, or perpetuating legends and superstitions, allows people to unify through cultural practices that are meaningful for them. Sustained belongings result from engagement and exchange of culture that is meaningful for those constituting the collective.

Group style. There is a way to interact with others at CrossFit. It does not matter who you are or how you see the world, when you show up for a WOD, there is pressure to enter CrossFit mode. Though many have self-serving reasons to be at the gym, the focus in CrossFit is on the collective. At the entrance to the gym, there is a chalkboard that lists twenty rules, beginning with, "#1, No Egos., #2 Introduce yourself to everyone." These top-down regulations set the stage for interactions in the context, but this is matched by the efforts of willing participants to live the spirit of these rules. Though there are personalities that shun the collectivist dynamic, most CrossFitters do their part to uphold the communal atmosphere of CrossFit. Every patron opts to pay costly dues for this atmosphere, over the anonymity of "big box" gyms like Gold's Gym or Anytime Fitness.

New members and those who are out of shape are generally not marginalized or ridiculed. Instead, they are invited to enjoy "our CrossFit family." A supportive orientation is expected and encouraged. When someone is struggling to finish a WOD, the trainer will often lead by example and cheer for the person: "Come on, you can do it! You've got this. Wooo! Finish strong!" Others clap and yell words of encouragement for the person who is finishing last. The throbbing music does not stop and no one puts away their equipment or leaves the floor until everyone has completed their final movement. The collectivist group style of CrossFit emphasizes that the workout is not done until every CrossFitter has finished.

CrossFit's supportive, collectivistic group style allows for hyper-conservative bankers, radically liberal graduate students, military personnel, and stay-at-home moms to bond by participating in interaction that celebrates the collective rather than the individual. Eliasoph and Lichterman (2003:735) define a group style as an "implicit, culturally patterned style of membership." They offer an example of how bar patrons' group style of "active disaffiliation" allows for a heterogeneous group to socialize. While there is sideline humor and there are those who do not fully "buy in" to the collectivist group style of Alliance, the group style is so strong that even a quiet or dispassionate individual at the back of the room does not undermine the collectivist group style. In encounters, the group style of Alliance CrossFit mitigates hierarchy and promotes community by pressing introverts and egomaniacs to adapt their behavior to suit the group-oriented style that governs encounters in the box.

Behind the professional front that is upheld for the public, a crass form of no-holds-barred humor and proletarian sensibilities abound at Monacan (cf. Brunacini 2008; Smith 1972). You need to be able to dish out a joke and take a joke in the firehouse. In this white, male-dominated cultural space, racist, raucous, sexist, scatological jokes about the poor, minorities,

women, and homosexuals carry a cache of meaning, along with those about firefighters from other departments and even fellow members of Monacan. In the firehouse, it is an unspoken mandate to take a cool stance toward anything offered as a jest, tease, or prank. Adhering to the group style of the firehouse, someone is not "in the men's room," they are "rubbing one out in the can." A story of an African-American victim cannot be told without imposing a stereotypical name, such as Jamal or Shaniqua, and offering conversational dialogue with an exaggerated Ebonics dialect. Recounting a tale of a car accident involving a Toyota Prius, one firefighter describes the vehicle as, "one of those tree-hugging, faggot Obamamobiles." This group style of the station and the fire service calls for members to keep the joke going, providing a basis for bonding through politically incorrect deviance.

These sorts of comments can lead to feelings of alienation and marginalization in the minds of those who personally do not share their worldview. In Monacan, like in many rural, Southern, volunteer fire departments, minorities and women are exposed to offensive, objectifying, and critical comments that may violate their individual moralities. As one Muslim and Pakistani firefighter, Captain Saleem tells me: "Yeah, this place is basically all white racists. I'm OK with it though because I've got more brown people jokes than they'll ever have, plus I know some good redneck ones too." Though these may cause offense to the individual, maintaining a cool stance to the callous and crass humor—adhering to the group style—is central to maintaining community. The interactional style demands that one at least be tolerant of offensive comments and mandates to keep the joke going. There is collective pressure not to take a serious stance on these issues, as this would undermine the belonging produced by the shared group dynamic. Those like Captain Saleem may compartmentalize or sacrifice their own morality to take part in the group style of the collective to experience sustained belonging. A tax

on one's conscience or a sacrifice of one's individuality is the price paid to find belonging in the collective. An individual's calculus might arrive at the decision that it is not worth that price to participate in the community, but most who stay involved sacrifice a bit of individuality to participate in the group.

This sort of group style serves a utilitarian function for the collective. Facing madness, traumas, and death in the line of duty requires a reprieve from seriousness. Most contribute to the crass, proletarian humor, and (at the least) everyone latently participates. This group style allows the collective to bond and endure despite having to navigate constant hardships, death, and an unyielding routine.

Compared to Monacan Fire and Alliance CrossFit, the group style that governs interaction in the hospital is upheld by both institutional regulations and individuals' own cultural practices. A new pediatric resident comments on the group style at Southern:

> When I'm at the hospital, I get excited over stuff that only we would get excited about. Reading the symptoms of a patient and coming up with an accurate diagnosis is why we're there, especially if it's something that you don't see every day. That's gold. I like giving good news more though. That's a lot of why I went into [pediatrics]... We all get a little bit excited to put on the white coat and go into the hospital to do that kind of thing. Now, it's not like this with some of these backwoods little practices with one doctor who is twenty years behind the times. I had one like that on one of my rotations. Going in there was depressing; it's like you time warped back to a dystopian 1985. But in a top hospital, like Southern, there's something about being there, where everyone is good at what they do that makes you want to be that good, just so you can be a part of it.

Though this account may seem a bit idealized, this young doctor describes the feeling of belonging that results from participating in the competent professionalism of the hospital. While this code of conduct may seem dehumanizing and it denies meaningful connection with patients under a shroud of professionalism, there is also a pull for people to reap benefits of belonging by conforming. Functionally, this group style manages to put forward a front of skill and professionalism to patient-customers. For those who enact it, adherence to this professional style results in feelings of sustained belonging amongst others acting in a similar manner. They feel

like they are a part of something special, getting a charge from fulfilling the role of doctor and doing it well. Being part of this team yields connection and instills a need for deeper integration into the collective.

Group style is a sustained manner of interacting that is upheld by those constituting encounters. These "implicit, culturally patterned [styles] of membership" (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003:735) endure across encounters and parallel other cultural practices. In many cases, these enduring, shared grounds for interaction can overly facilitate belonging, like in the case of CrossFit. In other cases, a more active, goal-oriented style encourages competition, but such a culture still binds a collective around a common value, such as achievement (e.g., Ho 2009; Kunda 2006; Marschall 2012).

Definition of the situation. While group style helps us to understand how interaction itself shapes opportunities for belonging, the endurance of that belonging mostly emerges from a common "definition of the situation" (Thomas and Thomas 1928), an understanding of norms, values, and roles of an encounter. I argue that congruence in definitions of situations is conducive to the emergence of sustained belongings. It is this congruence that makes instrumental actions possible, such as public transit and retail transactions, but I argue that this is also central to the emergence of belongings in encounters. When people with common definitions of the situation align in the same encounters, conflict is minimized, emotional engagement occurs, and sustained belongings can develop.

CrossFitters spend comparatively little time together each week, but a strong definition of the situation plays a central role in the emergence of meaningful sustained belonging. At the conclusion of my introductory class, the trainer offered a rehearsed statement: "We would love to see you again soon and welcome you into our unique community built on fitness, nutrition,

and fun." A few weeks later, I found myself coaxed to join the regular class by a trainer: "You might be really sore and find yourself on the floor… but it'll be fun, at least the kind of fun that we have here in CrossFit." At this moment, our understandings of fun were disjointed.

Strong community allowed me, like so many other new CrossFitters, to persevere until I began to embrace their specific brand of bodily conditioning. Like learning to overcome the bitterness of coffee or the burn of cigarette smoke, the support and pressure of those around me and a desire to maintain appearances (cf. Goffman 1959) helped me to eventually see CrossFit as fun. Indeed, most CrossFitters learn to become excited about pushing one's cardiovascular limits and achieve personal records on Olympic lifts.

Russell, the individual from the opening vignette of this dissertation who dismissed CrossFit as "type two fun," described his changed perspective in an interview over a year later:

> I like coming in here. Trying to see how much I can lift… That's what I'm good at. I guess there's something about the lifting with you and all the guys we came in with that's addictive for me. Burpees though, forget it.[23]

After a long adjustment period, Russell hints that he has come around to enjoying himself at CrossFit. He is able to experience the physical conditioning of CrossFit as a fun challenge. Entering the Alliance box with all the other CrossFitters, he finds community amongst those who share a common definition of the situation.

Those in CrossFit share a common definition of the situation, interpreting the corporeal conditioning as intoxicating, invigorating, and rewarding fun. Only by adopting this perspective would people surrender well over $1000 annually to participate in the collective. Sharing the encounter with those who adopt a common definition of the situation thus produces sustained belonging among CrossFitters.

[23] A burpee is a movement where one begins in a standing position, drops into a squat position, kicks feet back, touches one's chest to the ground, returns to the squat position, jumps, and claps one's hands overhead.

A similar acquisition of a unique definition of the situation allows firefighters to interpret high stress encounters as fun. Firefighters celebrate the mantra: "We crawl into burning buildings that other people run out of." While this may be interpreted as honorable community service on the front stage, it is celebrated as fun on the back stage (Goffman 1959). As FF Tarvin, a four year veteran, preached to me as a new recruit: "I don't need to go party. This is my high. If showing up to a rolling structure fire doesn't get your heart rate up, then there's something wrong with you." Her statement hints at the common understanding shared by firefighters that labels high stress situations as desirable excitement.

From the view of a firefighter, mitigating human tragedy and facing danger are framed as moments of excitement and fun. On a slow Christmas morning, I comment to another firefighter on the holiday shift how few alarms have sounded. Battalion Chief Carter interjects, "Don't you worry. Most Christmases we usually get a good fatality or two." This conversation evolves into an account of "one of the funnier shootings" in institutional memory. Traumas have become so familiar that any alarm departing from routine is understood to be fun. Firefighters bond through their participation in and celebration of their own idiosyncratic brand of amusement.

While physicians trade in life and death, their battles come in much more rationalized spaces with rigorous expectations of satisfactory care and professionalism. Appearances of excitement must be suppressed in the name of professionalism. When asked about fun, one medical student on his internal medicine rotation, Ken, tells me:

> I'm not sure fun is the right word. It's more like it's exciting and challenging professionally, and I like that. That's part of why I want to be a place like Southern... Like the other day, we had this guy who just wasn't getting better and somebody on our team thought maybe it was this really obscure disorder. And that's what it ended up being. It was crazy to be part of that. That stuff isn't in the protocols. That's Wild West, old-school gunslinger medicine where you roll with your gut. To be part of that, even just on the sidelines really, was fun.

"Wild West" medicine is fun for physicians. Ken's comments suggest that celebrating professional freedom is a binding definition of the situation amongst those in medicine.

This professional front, rooted in service, is paired with hedonistic "boy's club" mentality that laments atrophying physician autonomy and male privilege. Over happy hour drinks with second and fourth year medical students, an ethnically diverse group of men in their twenties vent about the hardships of the week. Dr. Gupta tries to top everyone with his account of a patient who scheduled an appointment at 8:00 a.m., causing him to come in three hours earlier than planned:

> So, this Asian cunt scheduled this appointment at 8:00 a.m. for a cold sore. I walked in. I was drunk as shit from going out for Halloween. I mean I was wasted. I was totally hating this bitch. All professional like, I looked at her and told her, "That's a herpes virus, a lot like the one you get from having sex. It will never go away; you'll have it your whole life." Her face got white. I thought she was gonna cry. [pause] That's what she gets.

One medical student, two years his junior, claps his hands, and cackles, "That's awesome." Everyone erupts in a storm of laughter. In this secure space, the physicians-to-be have fun unwinding and exchanging war stories of challenging patients and their trials of maintaining a professional front. A common definition of the situation and a position of entitlement lead to the development of sustained belongings from this happy hour.

Operating from the standpoint of the encounter rather than the psychologies of individuals, interactions constituted by participants with similar definitions of the situation are conducive to the development of connections. While common definitions of the situation and interactional styles tell us about encounters, there are other components to the cultural architecture of sustained belongings.

Superstition. Due to staffing issues on a forty-eight hour shift, Monacan can only staff one engine on a Saturday evening, so the same group of six firefighters must take every call. After running a medical call at 11:43 p.m. for an intoxicated person complaining of chest pain

and a 1:55 a.m. alarm for a woman in her eighties who had fallen, the driver, FF Monroe, a twenty year veteran volunteer, teases the engine company: "You know, these things come in threes. I'm telling you. When 4:00 comes around, we're due for another bullshit call." From the back of the engine, another sleep-deprived firefighter rebukes this proclamation, "You better be joking." After the engine company returns, stealing nearly an hour of sleep, another alarm comes in at 3:23 a.m. for a "medic-level unconscious person." On arrival, an ambulance crew is tending to a woman sitting on an external stairwell of a motel and the engine is placed "in service" by the medics. No one on the engine even unbuckles their seatbelt. Playing up the superstition, FF Monroe jests: "Well Monroe, you almost called it. What time is it? 3:30. You said 4:00 we'd get a call. It's just a little early." Monroe, who suggested that another call was coming, replies: "I told you so. These things always come in threes." To rationalize a 48-hour shift without sleep, Monacan firefighters uphold a false belief about these occurrences. Collectively upholding the superstition is a game that allows the group to bond in a moment of hardship, while sustained belongings are built on continued participation in these cultural processes.

Superstitious beliefs also develop around the presence of specific individuals. In the context of Monacan, firefighters are labeled as "white clouds" or "black clouds." Utilizing a meteorological metaphor, individuals are believed to generate or suppress calls with their presence. Most everyone wants a "black cloud" on their crew to generate exciting fire related calls, such as structure fire calls, but they malign a "black cloud" that generates "bullshit" calls, such as in the example above. Collectively upholding this superstition and participating in the game of believing results in momentary solidarity and community over time.

Superstitions are not just a pastime of relatively uneducated firefighters. In the context of the hospital, superstitions are also upheld by highly educated M.D.s. In internal medicine and

emergency medicine, the superstitious beliefs of patients are mocked behind closed doors, yet these same physicians have their own superstitions. For example, optimistic beliefs held by patients and family members of terminal patients who have a miniscule chance of recovery are subjects for jokes. In contexts sheltered from patients and families, it is an ongoing practice to recite a line spoken by Jim Carrey's character in the 90s film, *Dumb and Dumber*: "So, you're telling me there's a chance." Thus, they tease the commonplace prying of family members who find comfort in hearing a physician state that there is a small statistical probability of recovery or long-term survival. On the other hand, these self-proclaimed "men and women of science" make superstitious statements like, "Whenever we work together, we have a patient code [go into cardiac arrest]." The presence of individuals, staffing arrangements, workloads or assignments, and astronomical events are all superstitious explanations for patient outcomes and the volume of patients. Even in the rational and scientific communities, superstitions provide a basis for bonding through a game of believing. In a given moment, a joke helps the group face hardships, such as the stress associated with informing patients of a gloomy prognosis. Over time, these systems of shared cultural understandings are another leg of enduring community.

As superstitions are irrational beliefs that future events can be influenced or induced by specific, unrelated behaviors or occurrences, they often involve misperceptions or selective perceptions of the probability that an event will occur. Interestingly, belief is feigned or rationality is suspended to allow group participants to bond. In many cases, those who participate do not actually believe in the explanation, but choose to uphold and perpetuate them anyway. For the individual, this provides a self-serving route towards integration, but it also binds the group through a game of believing. An attempt to falsify a superstition can result in a lack of integration or marginalization from the in-group. Any attempt to disprove or debunk a

superstition is an assault on the collective culture of the group. Upholding superstitions can bring people together in the moment, but long-term membership is defined, in part, by knowledge of these beliefs and participation in the collective process of upholding them.

Legend. At 5:50 a.m., all of the firehouse volunteers are long asleep for the evening and the paid "career guys" are arriving to begin their day shift. An alarm comes in for a cardiac arrest. Due to the staffing turnover, Monacan can get nine firefighters out of the building, including six Emergency Medical Technicians. On the floor of the master bedroom of the home, there is a sixty-one year old man lying in a small pool of blood, suffering from head trauma from being pulled to the floor for C.P.R. by his wife. Upon making entry, the crew begins C.P.R.; one of the probationary members removes the distraught wife from the bedroom; and medics hook up the defibrillator and start an I.V. to deliver drugs intended to encourage the heart to restart. The non-E.M.T. firefighters, including myself, take turns performing chest compressions. If done properly, a provider becomes exhausted after about two minutes of bone-splintering work. Four cycles of C.P.R. into the incident, the man regains a heartbeat and begins breathing on his own. He is quickly loaded into an ambulance and transported to the cardiac care unit at the local hospital. One week later, the patient defies the odds; he makes a full recovery and walks out of the hospital.

Months after the event, FF Jones, a veteran with a decade of experience, reflects on the meaning of this particular cardiac arrest for him and the department:

> That's the one call that happens once every ten years or more that most people may not see; this person who statistically shouldn't be alive, walk back out of the hospital and be fully functioning, like this guy is going back to work. And just being around a group of guys… that's why they're there for… That's the big one as far as medical goes. …Everybody gets taught C.P.R. It's a minimum. So, it's bulk training for that small percentage and we were lucky to see that one percentage that actually happened.

Jones' words serve to consecrate the event for others. Firefighters spend a great part of their time training for contingencies that seldom occur and even less frequently have optimal outcomes.

But this case of C.P.R. is deemed worthy of consecration for a number of reasons. The event involves near optimal execution of the Chain of Survival: recognition of cardiac arrest and activation of emergency response, early C.P.R., rapid defibrillation, effective advanced life support, and integrated post-cardiac arrest care. It also involves career and volunteer firefighters working together. The event becomes department legend. The narrative of this call serves as a reminder of why volunteers serve.

Legends do not always highlight great deeds or even positive ones. Early on in my time at the fire station, FF Sully tells me about everyday legends: "You don't really belong until your name has become a verb. When people know what it means 'to Scarborough' then you're somebody around here." These names often refer to less than favorable actions: crashing the fire engine, burning dinner, reversing a vehicle over the station's mailbox, having sexual relations in the station, engaging in embarrassing radio communication, or to be known for "performing exorcisms in the bathroom." One probationary member earned the nickname, "Joe Dawn," after overflowing amounts of "joe" from the coffee maker and "Dawn" dish detergent from the dishwasher during back-to-back shifts. These everyday legends filter actions through the group style to produce meaningful, binding culture.

Recounting of legends, as war stories, horror stories, or trials occurs amongst all enduring groups. Physicians create legends around the trials they are forced to endure, such as unyielding attending physicians on rotations, difficult patients, and obscure diagnoses. CrossFitters focus on legends of corporeal prowess: achieving a new "one rep max" on an Olympic lift, finishing a certain number of rounds on an AMRAP workout, and succeeding at competitions that offer opportunities for visibility outside of the gym. The common feature of these legends is that each

highlights culturally valued actions performed by a member of the group. Celebration of these legends reifies morality and yields sustained belonging.[24]

Legends are narratives of human actions that are held within the collective memory of a group or institution. These legends typically offer a cultural vehicle for celebrating and collectively remembering valued actions. A legend cannot be imposed on a group and yield belonging. Legends must align with the grassroots values and practices of a collective to have a binding effect. They are an important form of culture that allows the group to locate long-term community in the moment. They also allow narrators and listeners to understand themselves as contemporary agents of a group or institution that exists beyond a specific encounter. Independent of any properties of the encounter or other cultural process, recounting a legend sustains belonging by affirming identification with a common collective.

Institutional Cultural Infrastructures

While grassroots cultural practices play a core role in the emergence of sustained belongings, all interactions transpire within a matrix of social institutions. Some definitively occur in a brick-and-mortar institution, like a hospital or firehouse, while others occur in the shadow of institutional influences. Institutional cultural infrastructures impose upon or latently structure those navigating an encounter. For this top-down cultural apparatus to yield sustained belongings, it must be homologous with the grassroots practices of those constituting the encounter, or at least find latent acceptance. However, this infrastructure is also consequential for belonging as it can provide cultural continuity in lapses between face-to-face encounters.

[24] Personal boasting of one's achievements celebrates the self rather than those of the collective. This is antithetical to belonging. When these tales come across as a self-serving status claims, these "legends of the self" become a vehicle for inequality and hierarchy rather than community (see chapter six). Recounting tales of one's own achievements is accompanied by a risk of becoming known as a self-promoting braggart. These can also be toxic to community. Legends are most effective at facilitating sustained belonging when told by others; this emphasizes the core values and morality of the collective without the corrupting effect of individualistic pursuits.

CrossFit is an engineered community (cf. Kunda 2006). The institutional cultural infrastructure of the national organization shapes the formal and informal culture of Alliance CrossFit, while the general manager and specific trainers add their own spin to these cultural structures. CrossFit equipment, style of workout, and types of movements used in a CrossFit workout are all outlined and limited within the formal guidelines of CrossFit affiliation, which, in turn, are defined by the national organization ("Affiliation" 2015). At Alliance CrossFit, every class is "programmed" by the general manager and is led by a trainer with at least a CrossFit "Level One Trainer Certificate." The general manager "programs" workouts into cycles that emphasize development of technical skills and weight lifting abilities.

Within the confines of the CrossFit fitness model, the general manager defines the culture of a CrossFit affiliate. As one long-time CrossFitter describes the role of the general manager:

> The G.M. really defines sets the tone of the box. If they post crazy workouts with a ton of weight, it kind of says, "We're a Meathead CrossFit box," but if you post a lot of easier ones then it's a more egalitarian setting that's approachable by most anyone. Some gyms are full of all these huge bros and others have soccer moms, pregnant women, and are pretty open and friendly to everybody…

Thus, the general manager has a heavy hand in shaping the regulations of a specific CrossFit gym, within the guidelines of "CrossFit" as a brand and its exercise philosophy.

Various trainers lead their classes through workouts at set times over the course of the day. Each trainer adopts their own style, but this must be developed in line with the national organization's guidelines for CrossFit and the vision of the general manager. These personalized styles of trainers can range from intensely pushing everyone to maximize weight and effort to an easy-going, "everybody's here to have fun," attitude. In a medium-intensity CrossFit box like Alliance, there is a heavy emphasis on correct form and community. Instead of pushing patrons to compete or attain a new "P.R." (personal record), most trainers emphasize completion, health, form, and a climate of inclusion. Most trainers go out of their way to learn everyone's name and

to lead interactive warm-up exercises to facilitate inclusion. The structure imposed by trainers is an institutional mechanism of imposing a collectivist culture that is conducive to belonging.

The common investment of patrons in the cultivation of physical bodies makes them receptive to the institution's cultural infrastructure. There is a willingness to sacrifice autonomy and individuality to take part in the group. It is this common group style that sets the stage for long-term investment in the collective amongst CrossFitters.

Much like general managers of a CrossFit box, those in positions of institutional authority, such as hospital administrators and fire officers, have a heavy hand in regulating the culture of their organizations. Drawing on institutional power, their actions and resolutions produce culture infrastructure that shapes the behaviors that transpire in these social spaces.

At the hospital, regulation is produced by two institutional bodies: the Southern Physicians Group (representing those who practice in the hospital) and S.A.H.S. (representing the interests of the hospital).[25] Each of these bodies has a board that represents their constituents and struggles to implement regulation that limits and promotes conduct befitting their interests. The interests of those who work in the hospital are perpetually in a state of tension with the Southern Academic Health System's goals of providing efficient care to the maximum number of patients.[26]

Attempting to become, "a national leader in quality, patient safety, service, and compassionate care," these bodies implement policies that emphasize patient-centered professionalism, such as: formalized dress regulations, codes of conduct, and, most importantly, guidelines on how to arrive at medical decisions in consultation with patients. A culture of

[25] This is an over-simplification of the vast bureaucracy of Southern Academic Health System. For example, there are also regulatory and supervisory groups that represent the interests of residents and medical students.
[26] Health care is big business in America. However, market pressures and internal politics differ across public, managed care, and Catholic hospitals (Reich 2014).

professionalism is mandated through elaborate policies that ensure the vision, mission, and values of Southern are successfully enacted by those working in their institutional space.

While a volunteer fire department is a much simpler organization than the expansive and manifold bureaucratic structures of an academic healthcare system, regulatory policies are still pervasive in the fire service. Each department drafts its own "Standard Operating Procedures" to outline the conduct of members. These are additionally paired with "Rules and Regulations" that serve as an organizational constitution in that they define organizational purpose, definitions of membership, member duties, candidacy procedures, and other department policies. These are in a constant state of tension with the regulations of the expanding career firefighting system. Much like in the hospital, institutional policies dictate how those representing Monacan must conduct themselves. In the institutional space and when representing the organization in other encounters, top-down regulations limit the types of actions, cultural displays, and behaviors that are acceptable.

Formal institutional structure perpetuates sustained belongings by providing a top-down means of ensuring cultural continuity among a rotating cast of participants and by bridging the gaps between face-to-face encounters. Whether rooted in the bylaws of international organizations or the decision-making of one individual in a position of power, formal institutional regulation facilitates a predictable culture for the encounters in its spaces. Alliance CrossFit is one such context where organizational regulations facilitate a collectivist culture that makes transferring or "dropping in" to another CrossFit gym an easy task. Similarly, a regulated culture allows for an institution to persist, even with a rotating cast of characters. The culture does not have to be recreated in a bottom-up manner each time people congregate; it has an institutional cultural infrastructure that endures.

These regulations provide coherent guidelines for conduct that facilitate and magnify sustained belongings when in line with the grassroots cultural practices of voluntary participants. I have been discussing brick-and-mortar institutions, but similar processes transpire informally amongst social institutions. Institutions like social class, family, and patriarchy all empower and limit opportunities for sustained belongings. Whether brick-and-mortar or social, not all institutional cultural infrastructures are readily accepted. Top-down cultural structures can also be alienating. In culturally contested or ill-defined encounters, grassroots cultural practices are often at odds with the formal and informal institutional cultural infrastructures. A lack of institutional cultural infrastructure results in anomie, but too much regulation robs people of their freedom and autonomy.

Culture and Multiple Belongings

A focus on encounters, rather than individuals, allows us to understand the role of culture in belongings. I argue that culture is important for understanding situational belongings, but axiomatic for the development of sustained belongings. Embodied and material cultures allow for people to connect in encounters, but occasionally idiosyncratic culture is produced in interaction, thus bringing people together. Sustained belongings can emerge out of repetition of belonging-inducing encounters, but they can also emerge from more complex cultural processes.

Both institutional cultural infrastructures and grassroots cultural practices play a role in the development of sustained belongings. Culture can derive from nationality, social class, professional affiliations, institutional involvements, and peer groups. While institutional cultural infrastructure is durable, it is only likely to facilitate sustained belongings if it finds traction with the practices of the collective. Grassroots cultural practices, such as upholding a group style, definition of the situation, superstitions, and legends that are the strongest foundations of

community. These cultural practices stay with individuals as they move across institutions and over time. In sum, I argue that sustained belonging depends on culture; beyond mere affiliation, culture *is* what constitutes sustained belongings.

Most all of us understand ourselves as belonging to multiple cultural groupings: family, work, civic, social, and peer. We are involved and invested in manifold cultures that result in a corresponding plurality of belongings. At times, some of these involvements can even be at odds. Instead of pigeonholing an individual into a social identity, belongings can be better understand as qualities of encounters. With an eye on encounters, rather than individuals, we can see that culture plays a central role in the development of situational and sustained belongings.

Situational belongings are multiplex and ephemeral. The fieldwork for this research is rooted in a hospital, firehouse, and a CrossFit gym, but it is first and foremost a sociology of encounters. Belonging can emerge around culture in a variety of situations: a pair of shoes might spark a conversation between two people or a serendipitous affinity for Taco Bell might emerge through a discussion of dinner plans. Momentary instances of situational belonging can emerge around material and embodied culture in the action of encounters.

Looking at encounters also helps us to understand how people have a plurality of sustained belongings. These durable ties to family, work groups, civic, and social groups all are developed and maintained in encounters. This conception of encounters helps us to move away from an individualistic understanding of belonging that focuses on a self-proclaimed identity (Goffman 1959), such as "I'm a Baptist," or "I'm a lawyer." Alternatively, a model of belongings that is rooted in interactions offers a social understanding of how most of us maintain deep, meaningful connections to multiple groups alongside superficial "checkbook memberships" (Putnam 2000; Skocpol 2003) in others. Mere affiliation does not yield feelings of

belonging, but most people have meaningful involvement with many groups at once. I argue that sustained belongings are forged in face-to-face interactions through the exchange of meaningful culture.

Not quite like a toolkit (Swidler 1986) and not quite like a front (Goffman 1959), people enact different versions of the self to belong in various contexts. The embodied and material culture at our disposal allows people to enact different selves that are fitting for different contexts. One can have a CrossFit self, a physician self, and a firefighter self. Each of these involves a different cultural apparatus to connect with others. Each individual has a finite and specific stockpile of culture that can be combined into various social selves that are fitting for specific encounters. The limits of one's cultural reserves restrict the potential for belonging in various groups. Our selves are not one-dimensional or unmalleable; they are alloys of multiple belongings. When an encounter allows one to draw upon multiple belongings, such as class, institutional, and regional cultures, it is possible to find belonging in a range of groups. When several of these cultural stocks overlap, then we feel like we belong, like we are at home.

All of us negotiate a complex social world of belongings, situational and sustained, that have roots in culture. As people work, volunteer, and socialize, shared meanings and worldviews play a central role in bonding with others. This focus on cultural architecture is but one component of a sociology of encounters. A fully realized sociology of belonging needs to account for the ecology of encounters. Consequently, chapter four demonstrates how interactional ecology complements the cultural focus, helping us to further understand belonging. Attending to the cultural foundations of inequality, chapter five highlights the role of culture in the emergence of hierarchy.

Chapter 4. The Interactional Ecology of Belonging

The culture that is transacted in encounters only offers partial purchase on an understanding of belonging. All encounters are, in large part, a result of interactional ecologies. Qualities such as physical environment, intimacy, hardship, and interdependency play a foundational role in producing belongings in the moment. These belonging-facilitating qualities of encounters are not mutually exclusive, but overlap and act in concert multiplicatively to generate situational belongings. Interactional ecologies also produce sustained belongings in two ways. First, chains of encounters with qualities conducive to situational belonging can yield enduring connections. Second, ritualistic encounters that engage meaningful culture produce sustained belongings. These ritualistic encounters can either activate grassroots culture or institutional culture to result in durable identifications. Institutional rituals are better suited to integrate individuals into large collectives, while grassroots practices are superior mechanisms for binding small groups together.

Introduction

For new doctors-in-training, a week of winery tours and organized retreats geared toward acclimating a group of fresh faces into the social milieu of medical school is concluded with the "white coat ceremony."[27] In an ornate hall, steeped in tradition, the entering medical students, their families, and high-ranking medical school faculty gather for a formal, institutional indoctrination of the new students into the medical school. The white coat ceremony is a symbolic organization ritual where each new student gets cloaked in a crisp, white coat with custom embroidery. This ceremonial acquisition of material culture symbolizes integration into the timeless and international community of medicine.

The ceremony for the class of 2017 is opened by the director of the medical alumni association who begins by introducing the deans of the medical school and colleges. He emphasizes how these individuals offer guidance and leadership for the leaders of tomorrow. After this nod of respect, he introduces the new medical students: "I'd like to give a big, warm

[27] The white coat ceremony became common in the 1990s amongst medical schools. The event varies from institution to institution, but most medical schools now have a white coat ceremony. The ceremony marks either a transition from preclinical to clinical health sciences or the beginning of the first year of medical school (Gillon 2000; Jones 1999; Veatch 2002).

welcome to the class of 2017." This proclamation is met with ardent clapping and cheering from the audience.

After a brief review of the history of the ornate hall and surrounding university, he offers an account of the significance of white coats in the field of medicine:

> The white coat was added to our armamentarium, not until the 19th century, to protect us from contagion. There's a nametag on the front, not so much for your patients, but to remind you who you are. [laughs] Most importantly, the white coat reminds physicians of their professional duties as proscribed by Hippocrates, to lead their lives and practice their art in uprightness and with honor.

The coat is *not* touted as a symbol of status, but as one of belonging that links an inductee to a tradition of physicians. The dean continues:

> The Southern Academic Medical Alumni Association and School of Medicine proudly welcomes students into the family of medicine by which they join faculty, staff, relatives, and friends as they receive their new uniform today. Today's white coat ceremony welcomes those embarking on their medical careers to the community of physicians by giving them this powerful symbol of compassion and honor. It also gives them a standard against which they must measure their acts of care to the patients who trust them.

Thus, the ceremony celebrates the entrance of medical students into the community of medicine. They are welcomed as family and linked through moral obligation to other alumni. In particular, this moment marks an opportunity to energize and to invite adoption of the values associated with a medical career.

Saying that collective action bonds the group is too simple. This event generates levels of "collective effervescence" (Durkheim [1912] 1995) and associated level of "emotional energy" (Collins 2004a) amongst those in attendance. From a Durkheimian perspective, doing things together brings people together, but there is more ensuing in this case. There are qualities of this encounter that produce momentary solidarity, while also activating a sense of history and locating these new medical students in an enduring, intergenerational collective. This event is not just the ephemera of ritual, but is backed by the institutional gravitas that make the rituals more likely to produce sustained belonging.

At the coating ceremony, the next speaker is an alumnus of the medical school and the current president of the Medical Alumni Association's Board of Directors. He opens with a comment, "I get goose bumps over the family thing." He then proceeds to read off the number of medical school alumni associated with several of the new students. One family has three and another has four, but "those are junior varsity compared to the Hollins family, who are at ten." These are institutional attempts to instill the value of history and intergenerational community.

He goes on to emphasize that over $1,000,000 in donations are raised annually for scholarships for current students. He makes this charity personal by discussing the white coats: "These personally embroidered white coats are paid for by donations from the Medical School Class of 1965." He reviews all of the resources provided for current medical students by the alumni association and past alumni. The new students are challenged to consider "those who follow you in your footsteps." The speaker continues by emphasizing that new students are now part of a network of physicians that spans time, highlighting the expectation of involvement in the alumni network. Though he peddles involvement in his organization, he emphatically portrays the life-long commitment to the intergenerational collective of physicians. He encourages the physicians-to-be to connect with their cohort, the program, and the field of medicine.

Next, the president of the medical student self-government stands up to tell the new students that their efforts throughout undergraduate studies and during the application process are significant achievements:

> You've earned the right to wear white. You are now part of a global community of care providers, and the history of those providers who have come before you is woven into the weft of your coat, enhancing your resiliency. Your white coat is a wearable reminder of your choice of a life of service. You have answered the call of those in need of help and to guide them on the path to wellness… In not too much time, you will find that what your white coat stands for is what you stand for, to your family, friends, and patients… a caregiver and life-long learner in a path of service.

Using the coat as a material symbol for conveying meaning, he praises the young medical students and links their accomplishment of entering medical school with those of doctors around the world and throughout history. The ceremony frames this singular achievement as a step into a cultural community. This sort of institutional integration ritual could be received as unwelcome propaganda to a disinterested audience, but the smiles and cheers of the captivated and engaged audience indicate positive reception of the rhetoric of service and integration.

The speaker following is the president of the medical school, who in turn elaborates upon the emotional meaning of this experience:

> In a person's lifetime, there may only be about a half a dozen occasions where he or she can look back with a certain knowledge that right then, at that moment, that there was nothing but room for happiness in their heart. I want today to be one of those occasions… I hope that you look back on this occasion and have nothing in your heart other than room for pure happiness. Medicine is more than a job. It's actually more than a profession. Medicine is a noble calling that captures your heart.

After expressing and encouraging an emotional experience of involvement in the ceremony, she turns to the parents, similarly engaging and estimating their emotion: "I want to say to the family, you must be so proud. Thank you for all of your love and sacrifice you gave to your children so they could be here today." She focuses emotions with her comments by emphasizing the emotional significance and value of the ritual for those getting coated, family, and friends.

With the introductory speeches concluded, the senior Association Dean for the medical school guides the main event of the ceremony. He sets ground-rules for the ritual, explaining that college deans have the "the honor of placing the white coats on the students," unless a student is a "legacy." For them, it is the physician family member that bestows the white coat. With the rules established, the 161 young men and women parade across the stage, one by one. All of the young men wear khaki or dress pants, paired with a lighter long-sleeve dress shirt, a long necktie, and matching brown dress shoes and belt. The women wear above-the-knee dark dresses, paired with heels. The audience holds all applause, honoring the moment, broken only

by the occasional collective chuckle at robing gaffes. Once every student is coated, friends, family, and medical school faculty rise to give a standing ovation to the incoming students.

The dean of the medical school then leads the students in a recitation of the Hippocratic Oath. He opens by saying:

> Members of the class of 2017, as you take the Hippocratic Oath today, you will embark upon your career as physicians. Today, you will join Southern's community of healers. Today, you enter the medical profession. Welcome new sons and daughters of Southern Medical.

At his direction, every faculty member climbs onto the stage and the students stand in place. As he begins reading, the students fumble to locate their programs so they can read a modern version of the Hippocratic Oath off the program. The Oath emphasizes compassion, humanity, humility, self-awareness, prevention, and the ethics of conducting oneself as a physician (AMA's Code of Medical Ethics" 2015). Everyone recites in unison. Orally reciting the Oath is a symbolic covenant; there is no established committee to enforce the Oath or to try the violators thereof. It thus marks symbolic integration into a league of medical professionals—the entrance into an enduring community of belonging with those who share a common professional orientation and a common morality.

This annual event culminates in a group photograph of eager, proud, mostly twenty-two year old, faces—Southern Medical's class of 2017. The coordinated photo of all 161 inductees into a group picture is yet another nod to the significance of the moment. A professional photographer is hired to capture an account of the event for posterity.

There are multiple components to this event that try to fashion connection among the new students. First of all, the ceremony is conducted in the oldest, most ornate facility capable of holding a gathering of this size. The ecology of the space enhances the capacity for belonging to be produced by the ritual. Buildings alone do not generate belonging, but the 19th century hall focuses meanings amongst those who enter. In contrast to cheap, modular architecture of modern

structures, the unique and grandiose character of the building becomes a conduit for channeling meanings that people bring to the context. Heavy wooden doors maintain an inclusive community by physically and symbolically excluding those who are not relevant to the ceremony. The continuity of the structure also complements the rhetoric of inter-generational community. Departing from the context of the everyday, this older building is an ideal ecological setting for cultivating sustained belonging.

Second, the social ecology of the event, including the modes of interaction and roles of participants, is aimed at producing solidarity in the moment and priming those present to develop durable bonds. White coat ceremonies are a relatively new phenomenon, but are gaining popularity (Gillon 2000; Jones 1999; Veatch 2002). The success of these rituals is in part due to the social qualities of the encounter that bind participants in the moment. Many of those who are present become emotionally charged by the event. The encounter is exclusive; it is not open to the public, but limited to faculty, students, and invited guests. In a way, there is interdependency amongst participants; everyone wants the event to come off as intended; there are no hecklers, no protests, no critical commentary, and few disinterested participants. These conditions prime the interaction for the activation of shared meanings that hold value in medical and upper-middle class cultures to produce and maintain sustained belongings.

Beyond the exclusivity, intimacy, and common focus of those present, there are additional qualities of the encounter that facilitate sustained belonging. New medical students and their parents have traveled from across the country and around the world to share this moment. The common hardships associated with short-term and life-long investment by students and parents to arrive at this event yields interest and engagement in the ceremony. The congregation of new students, their parents, and the highest ranking medical school faculty

impress significance on the ritual. And so, the white coat ceremony at Southern Academic Health System takes on a quasi-religious aura. It marks a noteworthy transition from undergraduate student to fledgling medical professional and it indoctrinates new individuals into what is presented as a life-long calling of healing.

This ceremony provides a time and space where it is socially acceptable to celebrate integration into the medical community. The ritual serves to channel individual efforts into the moral calling of medicine. Attention focuses not only on the significance of the accomplishments of the students, but also on the moral course that these students are to follow. Untold hours of work and incalculable resources are expended to enroll these students into medical school, creating an audience that is receptive to ritualistic, institutional indoctrination into the medical community.

In this chapter, I outline the interactional ecology of belonging. I discuss how qualities of the encounter and its corresponding modes of interaction shape connection. I find that the physical environment, hardships, intimacy, and interdependency are properties of encounters that generate situational belonging. The more of these characteristics that are present in an encounter, the more likely that connection and situational belonging will emerge. Navigating repeated encounters with the conditions conducive to situational belonging can yield sustained belongings over time. Additionally, I show how certain modes of interaction that engage common culture are apt to generate sustained belongings. I argue that interactional ecologies play a central role in the emergence of situational belongings and that ritualistic encounters engage culture to facilitate sustained belongings.

Thus, I propose a distinction between institutional rituals and grassroots practices that can help us to understand how belongings develop out of interaction. This distinction shows how

structured rituals, manufactured by those in positions of institutional power, can provide a stable framework for belongings. On the other hand, grassroots practices allow for the development of deep, meaningful belongings in small groups.

Three Interactional Ecologies of Belonging

As the introductory vignette demonstrates, the white coat ceremony is an elaborate institutional ritual meant to yield sustained belonging. This is but one of several formal ceremonies on the journey to becoming a practicing physician. These institutional rituals bond individuals into an inter-generational collective of medical practitioners. Yet, these formal rituals are not the primary foundations of belonging amongst physicians. Through the trials of coursework, preparing for Boards, and working with demanding attending physicians on rotations, medical students collectively experience day-to-day hardships that lead to meaningful connections with peers. In residency, small cohorts experience an intimacy that leads to the formation of deep, meaningful relationships. Beginning with clinical rotations, medical students are exposed to encounters where they have contact with patients. These encounters involve working closely and trustingly with an interdependent team navigating interactions that trade in life and death. Bonds are made amongst work teams due to the collaborative nature of the work, but also due to common cultural values. Navigating the day-to-day institutional rituals on an everyday basis is binding, but these encounters also precipitate grassroots practices amongst work teams and cliques that also bring people together.

The fire service is a proud institution that is built on many rituals. The firefighting brotherhood, in significant part, emerges from the social ecology of the firehouse and from the nature of encounters in the fire service. At Monacan, firefighters eat together, share restrooms, and sleep in the same bunkrooms. They work interdependently, much like a family, to cook,

clean, and complete their day-to-day work. Institutionally mandated rituals like the ironing of dress uniforms, washing of the fire engines, and giving tours of the station to citizens of the community create value in membership and celebrate group integrity.

Risky, stressful, intimate, and interdependent work on the fireground binds firefighters to each other in the moment and into the firefighting brotherhood. Structure fires, vehicle extrications, and technical rescues are culturally valorized encounters that provide opportunities to execute formal and informal institutional practices that provide opportunities for participants to forge deep belongings. These are paired with grassroots practices that further encourage connection, such as firefighters coming together to cope with the egregious traumas they face in their shifts. Life-and-death encounters and their emotional fallout, along with the formal and informal institutional rituals of the fire service, yield high levels of situational belonging and, in many cases, life-long connections.

CrossFit involves a different breed of hardship than the collaborative work of firefighters and medical students. Alliance CrossFit, like CrossFit boxes around the world, maintains a physical environment and social ecology that is conducive to situational and sustained belongings. The bare-bones environment of Alliance focuses attention on the objective goal of ritualistic maintenance of physical bodies and the latent goal of generating community. The Workout of the Day (WOD) is the interactional staple of the community that allows for the emergence of situational and sustained belongings. The WOD is an intimate, institutional ritual where participants bare their corporeal constitutions. The hardships of these encounters are binding, but it serves as an effective vehicle for belonging because it channels common value of physical investment into a formal, participatory, integrative rituals. With the exception of the paid staff, all of those present are voluntary participants who are invested in the ritual having its

intended result of belonging. The engaging celebration of common values concerning fitness and lifestyle in the WOD makes it a successful mechanism of integrating willing participants into the Alliance CrossFit community and into the international network of CrossFitters.

Interactional Ecology of Situational Belongings

Situational belongings, momentary connections with others, are largely a product of interactional ecology. The qualities of the encounter and its corresponding modes of interaction lead to connection. Encounters structure their participants and yield situational belonging—an affinity or connection amongst those sharing an encounter. The four characteristics that generate situational belonging—physical environments, common hardship, intimacy, and interdependency—can be analytically separated, but often occur concurrently in the dynamic social world. One of these ecological factors is enough to yield situational belonging, but these have a compounding effect when multiple belonging-inducing qualities are present.

Physical Environment

Physical space shapes opportunities for connecting with others. For example, there is a difference between a firehouse and a fire station. During my time at Monacan, I witnessed the original firehouse become remodeled into a modern fire station. The firehouse and fire station represent ideal types of physical spaces that facilitate or undermine situational belonging.

In a firehouse, firefighters live together in tight quarters that are steeped in tradition and within walls lined with pictures of unidentifiable faces wearing familiar uniforms. Sharing a space with too few bathrooms, cramming around a dinner table, and sleeping in bunk beds with lumpy mattresses, it is a tall order to find privacy. However, in a firehouse, every space is a gathering space. The human density in this space is a source of discomfort, but it is also a basis for situational belonging. A firehouse feels like home.

At Monacan, firefighters lived through a renovation of their firehouse during my research. The original structure was far from the ideal characterization of a venerable New York City firehouse loaded with brass, wood floors, and a fire pole, but it did an excellent job of facilitating interaction amongst members. The kitchen area, large training room, TV room, and the bumper of the engine had long been gathering places. It was run down, but the somewhat cramped quarters made interaction and connection an unavoidable reality.

For thirteen months Monacan ran out of a temporary station, nicknamed "The Box," while the renovations were occurring. At "The Box," there was no place to break away from the group; privacy was impossible. Everyone was stuck together. In situations when there are no other options, people talk, bond, and connect. Yet, this high human density brews a recipe of connection and conflict.

Meanwhile, the new station at Monacan featured a four million dollar expansion and total renovation. The new building wields an impressive façade split with a glass midsection that exposes the station's new fire pole to passing traffic. The new building is grandiose, but it is also generic, modular, and rational. It is a commercial office space that is full of hallways lined with doors that lead to specialized rooms. Socially, these physical spaces provide isolation from others.[28] Indeed, the new station now has over thirty rooms. One actually has to work to avoid privacy. On the second floor alone, there are five bunk rooms, an office, a reporting room, a locker room, a theatre room, two training rooms, a study room, a recreation room, a dining area, and a kitchen. There are numerous places to be alone or become lonely. To find someone at the new Monacan station, it is necessary to page them over the intercom. Instead of hardwood floors

[28] Similarly, the anomic space in Southern's hospital segregates workers into rational, task-oriented labor. An academic health care center has hundreds of rooms for patients, but more importantly hundreds of rooms for health care professionals to do their work. Communal work stations, shared computers, and rest areas provide ecological niches of the hospital that are conducive to the emergence of situational belongings.

and open spaces, there is block, concrete, and drywall. The fire station feels cold, and it certainly does *not* feel like home. The physical environment does not force proximity, intimacy, interaction, or bonds. The firefighters call it "the fire palace."

On the first E-Crew shift at the renovated station, an ex-submariner who is accustomed to close quarters comments on the generic quality of the space: "Up here in the fire palace, if you want to find somebody, you've got to go on a quest. It's huge." Later that evening, another member enters the theatre room where I am watching football and typing up field notes. With a forced frown, she says: "I just wanted to say, 'Hi.' I feel like I've been alone all night." It is easy to be alone in a space with such low human density. A ten-year veteran of the volunteer department shows up late due to work and comments: "This place doesn't feel homey at all. How'm I supposed to sleep here? It feels like a fucking commercial office building." This space is a "fire station," a "fire institution," a "fire palace," but it is not a firehouse. Qualities of the environment, such as compartmentalized space and low human density are not conducive to the emergence of situational belonging and do not bode well for the development of enduring bonds.

On the other hand, Alliance CrossFit has a physical layout that leads to the emergence of situational belonging. The term CrossFit "box" captures the essence of the physical space. The gym amounts to little more than two huge rooms with abundant space, no mirrors, and no distractions. Everyone there for a WOD works out together in the large room. The gym is first and foremost a social space; it is one common room on a level plane with the sole function of facilitating group workouts. The open physical space facilitates teamwork and bonding amongst everyone who is doing equivalent tasks on the same large mat. The physical space counteracts anomie and hierarchy, while facilitating situational belonging amongst CrossFitters.

Environments shape their people. Shared restrooms and kitchens in the firehouse, shared break rooms and work stations for healthcare providers in the hospital, and a shared workout space in a CrossFit box are contexts that generate situational belonging amongst those who negotiate them. An open-floor layout, close quarters, high human density, and a lack of physical barriers facilitate situational belonging. Though spaces hold different meanings for those who inhabit them, the qualities of the space itself has consequences for the interactions within it. Qualities of the physical environment and social ecology can lead to the emergence of situational belongings.

Thus, given the variation in spaces across these contexts, one would expect the most belonging at CrossFit, with the medical students and firefighters tied for a distant second. But, other factors concurrently shape opportunities for connection.

Intimacy

Intimacy—proximity in physical space—breeds belonging. CrossFit centrally involves physical intimacy. In a bodily capacity, the gym is a context that exposes the front-stage and back-stage of one's corporeal life. Public displays of proficiency at Olympic lifts, including deadlifts, back squats, or "clean and jerks," expose an individual's corporeal constitution. During strength training there is an assigned strength portion of the workout such as:

> 5 sets of 3 OHS 135/95.

This requires everyone to complete five sets of three overhead squats at their own pace. The recommended weight is 135 pounds for men and 95 pounds for women, scaled for ability. This strength training is done in the main room of Alliance, where it is clearly visible what each person is lifting. In a context such as this, it is difficult to maintain a false front of physical prowess when day-to-day activities expose every CrossFitters' corporeal constitutions. The weight that one can back squat, the time one can run an 800 meter sprint, the number of

unbroken strict pull-ups one can complete, and the endurance of an individual across a circuit of exercises cannot be oversold in a workout. Physically, one is exposed to others. Thus, the inherent closeness and shared confidences of these sweat-soaked workouts with others are conducive to bonding.

Firefighters would not ever use the term "intimate" to describe their relations in the firehouse. This would conflict with the conventions of their working-class, masculine culture.[29] Yet, interactions in the firehouse are nevertheless very intimate—crews live together for up to sixty hours at a time. On a day-to-day basis, firefighters share bathrooms, sleep in squeaky bunk-beds, cook and eat together, complete crew workouts and play practical jokes on each other. Eating an unhealthy midnight snack, putting a cicada in a napping firefighter's hair, scaring each other with a mounted boar's head, and intentionally farting in close proximity to others are forms of intimacy that forge bonds out of routine firehouse encounters. Actions that are usually hidden from others in most other professional contexts cannot be hidden in the firehouse. The intimacy of these day-to-day relations bonds participants situationally and sets the stage for enduring connections.

For healthcare professionals, it is not only the repeated informal encounters in an institutionalized setting that leads to intimacy, but also the sharing of emotions in a highly objective world. They must negotiate their work as profitable and reimbursable services, on one hand, and as a moral and compassionate enterprise, on the other (cf. Rodriquez 2014). This is understandably an emotionally taxing undertaking.[30] Amongst residents or nurses who are

[29] Though male gender norms still pervade the context, this historically white, male, heteronormative brotherhood is increasingly inclusive. I discuss inequality relating to cultural belonging in chapter three and cultural inequality in chapter five.

[30] In instances where a patient is experiencing acute pain, negotiating a difficult decision, or is "beating the odds," healthcare providers often drop a professional front and actively empathize, experiencing moments of situational bonding with patients. This sort of emotional investment is costly. More often, a professional front is maintained that serves to limit emotional engagement with patients.

completing lengthy or draining shifts together, intimacy is common. Nurses often share emotional empathy on cigarette breaks as they huddle a few meters outside the "smoke-free zone" surrounding the hospital. The symbolic banishment from grounds is a form of physical isolation that creates a miniature community of belonging though it may only last as long as it takes to smoke a cigarette.

Coffee breaks to the hospital cafeteria or to a nearby retail establishment for the gourmet variety provide another outlet for intimate bonding (cf. Fineman and Sturdy 2001; Korczynski 2003; Stroebaek 2013). On one coffee break with two residents, Dr. Timmons, an internal medicine resident who usually has a pleasant and chipper demeanor, rants about his attending physician who overruled his prescribed line of treatment:

> Timmons: [to me] You're gonna want to write this one down.
> [shifting focus to the other resident] Some days I just want to burn that motherfucker's [Dr. Wright; attending physician] house down. Seriously, fuck that dude and his take-all-the-credit bullshit.
> Shaheen: …Wright's the attending, man. You know that's how it works. That patient had a great prognosis, no matter the treatment. You know that. [lengthy comments on career goals and the intermediate nature of their position]
> Timmons: [with a facial expression of feigned indifference] I guess I'll just take my medicine like a good boy.

Sharing complaints in a sheltered group is connection. These moments of solitude, brief reprieves from professional responsibility, allow for emotional release and bonding over strenuous rounds of patient care and other work-related hardships (cf. Pagis 2015).

Though cultural meanings provide programming for negotiating interactions, the social ecology of encounters can generate situational belonging (cf. Simmel 1950, 1972). More intimate encounters are more likely to yield belongings. In general, the intensity and likelihood of situational belonging developing in an interaction is inversely correlated with group size. Dyadic interactions, such as firefighters on an attack line at a structure fire (as in the opening vignette of chapter one) or a two-person team workout at CrossFit, are highly likely to facilitate solidarity.

Indeed, the firehouse bunkroom, a place ostensibly for sleeping, is a highly intimate setting conducive to connection. Most people at Monacan have a favorite sleeping spot, which leads to regular bunkmates. Sharing the same bunk-bed for over a year, myself on the top and FF Mallory on the bottom, led to many meaningful conversations. In the absence of the collective pressure to maintain the jocular group style, connections are forged in these back stage conversations over private topics such as a discussion of emotional recovery from a gruesome trauma on a call or over discussions of hardships with significant others. The physical isolation and privacy of the bunkroom allows for moments of serious dialogue and human connection.

Intimate contact—emotional or physical communion—generates situational belonging amongst consenting participants. The social context of privacy or isolation with another person can facilitate a situational bond. Physical intimacy that is shared between two consenting participants can also generate situational belonging—a momentary bond, even if only begrudgingly. Whether taking a car ride together, watching television, or completing an institutional task, situational belonging may emerge from the encounter. This is paralleled by emotional intimacy, which involves verbal and non-verbal communication of "back-stage" (Goffman 1959) qualities of the self. Emotional intimacy may emerge in encounters through meaningful conversations, airing of grievances, or from developing an understanding of the other. The combination of physical and emotional intimacy boosts the likelihood of situational belonging resulting from the encounter.

Hardship

Hardship is an ecological quality of encounters that is difficult to endure, deprives, or is oppressive.[31] Common hardship tends to generate situational belonging in encounters. If that hardship is shared—experienced together—then the effect on participants is compounded. Much like other qualities of encounters, the situational understanding of hardship varies by context.

Common hardships, especially those that are shared, can be a source of belonging. A CrossFit WOD is a daunting workout that ends up yielding situational belonging for most participants. Though it is a chosen hardship—no one has to do CrossFit—CrossFitters gather to share the hardship of completing the "Workout of the Day." It is common for participants to find rapport over the length, pain, or difficulty of the workout. After workout discussions vilify the stresses of the workout that everyone had to endure: "Those pull-ups were killer. My forearms are killing me!" Highlighting a common rapport, "It doesn't get easier dude. With that many double-unders, kettlebell swings, and pull-ups your forearms are gonna be the first thing to fail." Locating a common hardship external to the qualities of its participants forges a situational coalition. CrossFitters joke about these moments of connection, calling these "recovery seminars" or "pow-wows." After one long and cardiovascularly-taxing workout, everyone lies on the floor, collapsed, and breathless from the workout. A few moments later, a fellow patron comments to me: "I love the WODs where everyone so wiped that all you can hear is people gasping for air. That's Zen. You don't get that anywhere else." Though facing shared hardship together is already binding, these impromptu, post-hardship, commiserating sessions further serve to reify the experience of suffering together.

[31] I differentiate between hardship and what I label as "othering." Hardship is a difficulty that an individual or a group must negotiate. Othering is about exclusion; it is a stratification process of maintaining a distinction between insider(s) and outsider(s). I discuss advancement and exclusionary processes in chapters five and six.

Firefighters and physicians face similar sorts of hardships as they navigate their daily routines. Death, trauma, long hours, threats to livelihood or organizational prestige, the annoyances of bureaucracy, and paperwork all serve as external nuisances that unify insiders. For example, a terrible trauma often yields situational belonging through sharing a stressful experience. This occurs amongst nurses and doctors in a hospital and amongst firefighters and EMTs in the field. Far too often for the liking of firefighters, false alarm activations or medical calls for "trouble breathing" that come during meals or in early morning hours are characterized as "bullshit." These hardships are external evils that provide a basis for bonding (cf. Collins 2004b). It is common for firefighters to rant to each other inside the engine on the way back from these kinds of call: "Oh, you've felt like this for three days, but you called at 4:00 in the morning just to wake me up?"; or "We're a fire department, not a damn taxi cab service. This is a total waste of resources"; or "I knew it was going to be another false alarm. Every time we come out here, [to this poor, mostly-minority community] it's for this kind of shit." These statements are not made by one angry individual; it is usually a chorus of calls demonizing an external factor that creates hardship.[32] Of course, this sort of belonging only emerges when most interactants hold a common stance toward an occurrence. Sharing the experience of a lack of calls or disdain for an activity that is commonly understood to be a hardship for the group provide bases for solidarity and can generate belonging in the moment.

There is an important distinction that must be made between external hardships and internal hardships. External hardships, such as the designated loss of territory and reduction of calls for Monacan due to County policy, are seen as a binding external threat. Everyone in the department shares a common resolve to resist the policy change. When filtered through the

[32] Firefighters usually hold their tongues when it comes to making racially charged comments in the presence of one of the minority firefighters or complaining about providing lifting assistance for an obese patient in the company of a firefighter with a weight problem.

common culture of the group, shared suffering gives focus, meaning and identity to the collective. On the other hand, hardships produced by an insider lead to exclusion and conflict. These individualistic pursuits produce inequality, which I will address in chapter six.

Interdependency

In a training session for medical students on their psychology rotation, two advanced residents, Dr. Padilla and Dr. Menendez, review cases from rounds with several medical students. Dr. Menendez asks the students questions with a serious, inquisitive tone, such as: "How would you characterize [the patient's] disrupted speech patterns?" After several responses that describe rather than identify, Menendez tells them, "That's what we call jargon aphasia…" The students' faces show signs of embarrassment. Padilla interjects a comment, delivered with a big smile: "I have to look stuff like that up. What's more important is that you recognize it." After the students leave, Padilla raves to Menendez about how their instructional styles are complementary:

> I really think we make a good team when it comes to training. You're like the bad guy and I'm like the good guy… You're not exactly mean, but you are much tougher on [them] than I am. You ask tough questions and expect them to remember the answers. I'm too nice. If they don't know the answer, I'll explain it to them over and over again. This works.

While it is unclear how Menendez feels, she smiles and laughs, letting down her authoritarian front and connecting with her teaching partner. There is solidarity in the functional quality of their team. Pairing a supportive orientation with an authoritative orientation allows this instructional team to be flexible in managing a group of students who may be receptive to various leadership styles. In this case, bonding occurs over the efficiency of their collective approach to teaching. Beyond educating medical students, patient care requires teamwork with specialists and non-specialists to provide patient care. Comparatively, the emergency department is an egalitarian context with nurses, assistants, and physicians all working as a team to face the

unpredictable traumas that come in each shift. Belonging emerges from working as a team to realize a shared objective that no one member could accomplish alone.

Functional interdependency—needing others to accomplish a task—is more likely to be found in formal institutions than in informal social associations. At work, dissimilar individuals are sometimes grouped together to complete organizational tasks; in doing so successfully, they generate solidarity. For example, firefighters experienced functional interdependency on the scene of a motor vehicle crash on a 15 degree, icy morning. A 2:02 a.m., a dispatch for a single vehicle into a tree receives one fire engine and one ambulance. Upon arrival, the on-scene officer determines that the driver is entrapped—the semi-conscious, intoxicated driver is pinned in the vehicle.

The responding engine has four released firefighters who must work as a team, along with the two-person ambulance crew, to complete the operation. The driver's responsibilities are to position the apparatus to protect firefighters, secure the scene using cones, provide lighting, power up the generator, and manage water supplied to a hose line. Seat two, the officer, is in command, managing the actions of everyone on the scene: police, firefighters, emergency medical personnel, and incoming units. Seat three is responsible for fire suppression, deploying a charged hose line that is required whenever an extrication occurs. Seat four, where I am seated on this particular evening, is responsible for operating the hydraulic cutters and spreaders to remove the doors of the vehicle. The EMS providers in the ambulance are responsible for patient care.

The pop of the hydraulic air parking brake springs everyone into action. In a fluid operation, the scene is secured, the hydraulic tools are deployed, and a charged hose line is flaked out and charged. The officer directing the operation identifies the doors he wants

removed. I move quickly to make three cuts on the vehicle. The victim's spine is secured by someone "holding C-Spine," while another firefighter holds a blanket over the bloody patient to protect him from potential shrapnel from the cuts of the hydraulic tools. Once the doors are off the vehicle, firefighters assist the medics with removing the intoxicated patient, who is screaming out in pain. Six people carry the backboarded victim down the snowy embankment and load him into the ambulance.

The crew is packing up equipment before the chief, responding from home, even arrives on scene. On the way back to the station, FF Coffey comments: "That was awesome. Everybody did what they were supposed to do and we were so fast." Captain Bundy, the officer in charge of the incident, reflects on the teamwork displayed on scene:

> I think we did an amazing job, that call was only dispatched twenty minutes ago. We did it all before the chiefs got on scene. We didn't even see the heavy rescue. That was fast work. I'm really proud of everybody. That's how an extrication is supposed to be done.

Captain Bundy compliments everyone in the engine company for working efficiently and in a collaborative manner. In this encounter, each person fulfills her or his assignment, which allows for the extrication to be pulled off quickly and smoothly. In encounters like this one, the functional interdependency of working as a team yields connection in the moment, while latently suppressing individualistic pursuits and underlying conflicts.

Much like how modern society is comprised of autonomous, self-serving individuals who are bound together by functional interdependence, or "organic solidarity" (Durkheim [1893] 1964), interdependency generates belonging at the level of the encounter. Encounters with high levels of interdependency, resulting from working with and depending on others in encounters, yield situational belonging in the moment and can lead to sustained belongings.

Thus, interdependency, physical environments, intimacy, and hardship are qualities of encounters that are conducive to the development of situational belongings. The more of these

conditions that are present in an encounter, the more likely connection is to develop. Of course, interactional ecologies are connective, interactive conduits through which culture flows. By bringing in culture, this conception of encounters is enlivened with meaning. In the remainder of this chapter, I will turn my attention to how culture from institutional rituals and grassroots practices leads to sustained belongings.

Interactional Ecology of Sustained Belongings

I have shown the ways that interactional ecologies shape situational belongings, but interactional ecologies also play a role in sustained belongings, producing them in two ways. First, chains of encounters with qualities that yield situational belonging culminate in durable identifications with institutions and those who constitute their encounters. Over time, chains of encounters possessing these characteristics can generate enduring identifications with institutions and those who constitute them (cf. Collins 2004a). Second, ritualistic encounters that engage meaningful culture produce sustained belongings. Rituals are modes of interaction that involve sequential actions exchanging culture charged with meaning. The activation and exchange of institutional or grassroots culture that is imbued with meaning plays a central role in producing situational or sustained belongings.

Institutional rituals are patterned interactions that are mandated by those in positions of institutional power. Such interactions include graduations, dedications, trials, and meetings. Whether they are formal ceremonies or routine institutional procedures, these situations can become consequential conveyors of belonging when they garner intense engagement from invested participants. Due to the durability of social institutions, rituals tied to them also endure and are well suited to generating and maintaining sustained belongings within large collectives.

Meanwhile, grassroots practices are patterned actions that are developed or maintained by individuals, independent of institutional infrastructure. These grassroots rituals may include activities, or possibly even words, objects, or gestures that may need to be performed in a particular sequence at a particular time or place. Unique greetings, use of slang, specific eating habits, and drug use are examples of grassroots ritualistic practices. These grassroots practices provide an interactional context for transmitting the culture of a group through time and are powerful at facilitating sustained belongings.

Whether institutional or the product of grassroots practices, those ritualistic encounters that activate and reproduce culture that is meaningful to participants are most likely to yield sustained belonging. It is for this reason that some institutional rituals fail to draw people in. It is only those institutional rituals that activate culture that is meaningful to participants that result in sustained belongings. On the other hand, grassroots practices allow for nuanced and charged cultural meanings to spawn and reproduce deeper identifications among those invested in the encounter. This makes ritualistic grassroots practices an ideal interactional mechanism for producing tight, enduring bonds amongst smaller groups. I will begin with a discussion of institutional rituals before discussing grassroots practices.

Institutional Rituals

While CrossFit patrons perform the WODs, it is management that orchestrates these interactions; these are institutional rituals that are manufactured and directed by culture producers in positions of institutional power. The national organization mandates its "affiliate" gyms to adopt an exercise philosophy of "constantly varied, intense, functional exercise" that revolves around the ritualistic "workout of the day" ("Affiliation" 2015). CrossFit gyms uphold

this fitness philosophy through a number of institutionalized rituals that are intended to produce sustained belongings.

A WOD takes a limited number of forms. An AMRAP workout involves completing as many rounds of work as possible in a set amount of time. For example, one AMRAP calls for:

> AMRAP 20: 400m run, 10x front squats 95#, 10x power clean 95#

In this WOD, participants complete as many rounds as possible of a 400 meter run, ten 95 pound front squats, and ten 95 pound power cleans over a twenty minute period. Everyone starts together and ends together. Though people complete the workout at their own pace, it is done as a collective. Workouts can also be of the "rounds for time" variety, meaning that a certain number of repetitions of various exercises are to be completed as fast as possible. One "RFT" WOD calls for:

> 5 RFT: 6 CTB pull-ups, 9 box jumps 30", 12 kettlebells 70#

This WOD calls for five total rounds of six chest-to-bar pull-ups, nine thirty-inch box jumps, and twelve seventy pound, "American," overhead kettlebell swings. Everyone begins at the same moment and works to complete all 135 movements of the workout as quickly as possible. As people finish, they cheer for, and offer shouts of encouragement to those still working: "Come on, you got this," or "Finish strong! This is the last round!"

Whether the workout is an AMRAP or RFT, the workout concludes with the institutionalized ritual of every member writing her or his times and weights on the whiteboard at the front of the gym. Every member must participate in this institutionalized practice. At any CrossFit gym around the world, if you complete a workout, your information is recorded on the board for all to see. This institutional ritual serves as a form of collective accountability for everyone to give their best performance.

The CrossFit WOD is a manufactured ritual. In a gym with minimal equipment, an open floor plan, and no mirrors, the ritual of the WOD is an organizational mechanism for binding CrossFitters to each other, to the gym, and into international CrossFit culture. The movements and the workout programming follow the conventions of the national organization. These are implemented by the general manager and are coordinated by the trainer. These institutional, structured moments of joint action are rituals that bind a collective of voluntary participants. The physical space, intimacy, and shared hardship generate belonging amongst participants.

Over time, chains of belonging-inducing encounters yield enduring identifications. Though CrossFitters spend relatively little time in the gym, the institutional rituals that occur in this context are deeply enthralling in the moment and engage culture imbued with meaning by participants. It is the institutional rituals that make these WODs such excellent mechanisms of generating sustained belonging. Not only are those present drawn to each other in the moment, but the ritualistic encounter generates feelings of sustained belonging to Alliance CrossFit, the other patrons, and to the trans-local community of all those who practice the CrossFit philosophy and way of life. In other words, participants generate belonging amongst each other and within a larger collective by activating meaningful culture through the institutional rituals of CrossFit.

While the CrossFit WOD is the staple institutional ritual of Alliance, other institutional rituals happen less frequently and provide pause from routine for deep cultural engagement. These infrequent institutional rituals, imbued with great meaning, can leave participants with enduring identification with institutions and their people.

An example of one such ritual is Monacan Volunteer Fire Department's annual "Party in the Park." The annual event takes place on a Saturday in May. Hotdogs, hamburgers, salad, chips, and sides are served with non-alcoholic beverages. It is a laidback, family-friendly event

in a local park. Kids climb on the fire engines and are taken up in the bucket of the tower. Firefighters, significant others, board members, children, and county administrators all attend. Though lots of work goes into organizing an event such as this, the only formality is a brief speech and award ceremony.

Flanked by the Assistant and Battalion chiefs, the chief of the department stands at the head of the shelter to distribute awards. He shares a few informal comments about each awardee and the winner shakes the hands of the chiefs. The first award given is the "Honey Badger Award,"[33] awarded to FF Robinson.[34] The chief comments: "It seemed like she was always injured, had a surgery, [and] fell out a window doing a ladder bail, but despite all of that and being on light duty, she has been working on becoming a released driver." While this could be taken as a patronizing monologue, it is publicly treated as an acknowledgment of work and value.

Other awards are given for "Student of the Year," "Townie of the Year," "EMT of the Year," and "Line Officer of the Year." Rather than serving to segregate the brigade into castes, the goal of these awards is to divide the whole as a means to acknowledge more firefighters. The chief emphasizes that awards go to: "those people who always made an effort to come in when the department needed them." The final award is named after the longest serving chief, "The Frank Shiflett Award." The chief emphasizes:

> This last award is the most important; it really captures what the fire department is all about. It goes to a firefighter who displays the highest level of dedication to the department and to the community. This award goes to Jacob Dunn who has given so much to this station.

[33] A viral Youtube.com video of "The Crazy Nastyass Honey Badger" rose to notoriety in 2011 and was celebrated in popular culture. The clip was a video of a nature documentary with a voiceover narration of sassy commentary and anthropomorphization of the animal, including quotes such as "honey badger don't give a shit" and "honey badger don't care" ("Honey Badger" 2015).

[34] Awards for Rookie of the Year, Townie of the Year, Student of the Year, EMS Provider of the Year, Line Officer of the Year, and the Frank Shiflett Award are distributed every year. All of these are recorded on the plaques that hang in the firehouse. Other awards, like the Honey Badger Award, are distributed to acknowledge effort and service that do not fall within the traditional categories.

After each award the audience claps. With a plain-speaking, gracious style, the chief concludes the ceremony by thanking everyone:

> I just want to thank everyone, from the firefighters to the board, to the significant others. I thank you all for your continued service. All of your efforts provide a great service to the community. It's something to be proud of, and I really want to thank each and every one of you for your continued service.

His closing comments emphasize the cultural traits that are commendable in the organization. Awards are not given for physical prowess or skill, but for service and sacrifice in the name of the department. The audience reciprocates this appreciation. As the chief is attempting to conclude the ceremony, Captain Davidson, who just won the "Line Officer of the Year" award, announces to the crowd: "Let's give the chief a big hand for everything that he does." The crowd offers a long applause for the chief. While not everyone has the same level of enthusiasm and every organization has its grumblings about administration amongst the rank and file, no one chooses to share that discontent by withholding applause.

An institutional ritual, such as the distribution of awards activates culture that matters to the collective, solidifies sustained belongings to the organization and amongst its rank-and-file. This seemingly informal "Party in the Park" is not a stratification ritual. It is an orchestrated institutional ritual that brings together those invested in the organization to celebrate the core values of the group. Though attendance is not required, a majority of members excitedly come, eat lunch, and socialize. The institutional ritual rewards the general membership with food and community. More importantly, it offers token awards to those who exemplify the values of service and sacrifice that allow the organization to function. This sort of ritualistic encounter maintains sustained belonging by activating and reifying the shared values that are central to group membership.

While institutional rituals can be everyday events, such as a CrossFit WOD, these can also be once-in-a-lifetime encounters, such as a trial, retirement ceremony, or a funeral. The

white coat ceremony outlined in the opening vignette of the chapter is an annual event for the medical school, but it is an once-in-a-lifetime experience for each medical student. Similarly, one of the final hurdles to becoming a released firefighter is completion of the state-mandated "Hazardous Materials Awareness and Operations" course, which includes "emergency decontamination training." "Emergency Decon" involves learning how to cleanse a person who has been exposed to a hazardous material by stripping them down to their underwear and showering them with a fire hose. Firefighters take turns being "the victim," a role portrayed by being held at bay with a tool, stripped, drenched with cold water, all the while being showered with objectifying, homoerotic, and sexist commentary. This institutionalized hazing ritual is celebrated as a rite of passage. It is a marker of belonging in a brotherhood of released firefighters to have completed the exercise. Both "whitecoating" and "deconing" are once-in-a-career, ritualistic encounters. These are imbued with cultural meanings, which provide markers of belonging in a community of insiders.

Empty institutional rituals. Many organizational rituals are empty of meaning for participants and do not produce sustained belongings. Two ceremonies acknowledge the new four million dollar expansion of Monacan Volunteer Fire Department: ground-breaking and grand opening. The grand opening is an occasion of pomp and circumstance. Polished engines, bagpipers, "Class A" dress uniforms, and local news crews set a scene of order and propriety. Speeches by chiefs, board members, and regional politicians tout the service of members. This encounter allowed pause to commemorate improved services for the public and successful inter-organizational cooperation in gathering the resources necessary to realize a new fire station. Instead of a ribbon-cutting ceremony, there is a "hose uncoupling ceremony" in full view of local media and the public who are in attendance. Nonetheless, this ceremony does not generate a high

yield of belonging. Fire crews had been running out of the new station for over a month. Many of the firefighters understand the event to be "just for show," intended "for politicians" and "for the public." While wiping dirt out of the back corner of a seldom used compartment in the reserve fire engine, a released firefighter complains to a receptive audience of fellow firefighters: "So, let me get this straight. We are skipping training to clean for an opening ceremony for the station that's been open for weeks. Fuck that." This opinion falls on sympathetic ears who offer a chorus of complaints over our list of chores. While the grand opening ritual may generate some pride in the station due to the interdependence and hardship associated with preparing for the event, it holds relatively little symbolic significance for the firefighters who attend. Spending a week polishing engines, cleaning the station, and going through mandatory uniform inspections has little reward for those performing the work. While this event may serve a number of instrumental functions, the grand opening ceremony is a compulsory institutional ritual that produces little sustained belonging.

Fourteen months prior, the ground-breaking ceremony was a more effective institutional ritual at generating sustained belonging. After the monthly brigade meeting (another institutional ritual), everyone heads to the side of the station. A Battalion Chief who has served since the 1970s and the former chief, a founding member, offer oral histories of the first years of operation. The retired chief tells of a time when crews operated out of the maintenance garage of a mobile home sales business, the station ran less than two hundred calls in a year, someone had to hold open the bay door with a broom so the engine could exit the temporary garage, and free space was limited to room for a card table where people smoked and played cards. Everyone listens to these tales intently. It is a surprisingly focused encounter. There is none of the jocular

banter that is so common in the fire service. Instead, all offer a respectful ear to the longtime chief.

The event culminates in the retired chief symbolically breaking ground for the new building. Stomping the shovel into the ground, the wooden handle breaks from the metal base and he rolls down the hill to the sound of roaring laughter. It is the sort of serendipitous happening that turns into institutional legend; it is the sort of occurrence that "you wouldn't believe it unless you'd seen it." After the chief digs out a piece of earth with a new shovel, almost everyone present takes their turn to overturn a symbolic shovel-full. The membership then begins a collective prayer for the safety of all, followed by a toast of domestic beer for those who are not on duty and sodas for those running alarms. The solemn silence of the prayer gives way to celebration of a major development in the history of Monacan. The insider-only intimacy of the event, the involvement of everyone in the groundbreaking, the unanticipated tumble of the retired chief, the deviance of drinking at the station, and the opportunity to revel in the history of the station makes for a successful, once-in-a-lifetime institutional ritual that forges bonds in the moment and activates intergenerational, sustained belonging amongst those in attendance.

Both the grand opening and the groundbreaking events are formal institutional rituals that involved rites that set these events apart from everyday happenings, but the latter more clearly succeeds in yielding sustained belonging. Both institutional rituals provide an organizationally manufactured opportunity to affirm the moral and cultural compass of the collective, while also celebrating organizational happenings and values. However, the grand opening focuses on producing a reputable front to the public. In doing so, it is much less successful at yielding sustained belonging among current members. Inter-organizational politics do not bring firefighters together, but tales of hardship and brotherhood at the groundbreaking ceremony

strike a chord with fundamental values of those in the fire service. This shows that rituals must engage culture that is meaningful to participants to generate sustained belonging.

Failed institutional attempts at producing belonging are "empty rituals." Christmas parties where one "has to make an appearance," dreaded "team-building" exercises, and weekend retreats are institutional rituals that often fail to come off as intended by yielding sustained belongings. Indeed, ceremonies are not always understood as intended; sometimes group members are not invested enough or the ritual does not activate culture that is meaningful to those present. A non-believer can enjoy going to church and socializing at the post-sermon brunch, but this belonging does not parallel that enjoyed by the believer (Dougherty and Whitehead 2011; Wellman, Corcoran, and Stockly-Meyerdirk 2014). The same is true of secular rituals. Without meaningful cultural engagement, these gatherings often only generate belonging in the moment. A look at the grassroots practices of those who navigate these institutions gives us a complementary picture of the interactional foundations of sustained belongings.

Grassroots Practices

After training on any C-Crew shift, FF Gordon and FF Smith have a set routine: "the late-night scrounge" and "catwalking." There is no institutional mandate for their routine; this is a grassroots practice upheld by these two, though others often join in.

The "late-night scrounge" consists of making a late-night "fourth meal" out of leftover food in the fire department refrigerator. FF Smith walks me through the ground rules of scrounging:

> It's really an art. When you do the scrounge, you gotta know what you can eat and what you can't. Some shit has been in the fridge forever and has gone bad. So, that's gonna be a no go. You gotta look for things that other crews won't miss if you take just a little, or shit that you know is gonna end up getting thrown out or won't be any good by the next time the crew that made it is coming in. And, you need to get creative with it too. Like, there's almost always tortillas, eggs, and shredded cheese. Add somebody's leftover Chinese in there, add some Worcestershire sauce, and boom; it's the best thing you've ever fucking eaten. General Tso's breakfast burrito. Better than Taco Bell.

Not only do these two make late-night snacks every shift, but they are even excited to do it. As they dig through the refrigerator, they shout out comments, such as: "There's ice cream with nobody's name on it. I'm going to fucking destroy this motherfucker," followed by an ear-to-ear smile like one might expect from a child opening a present. A good find often generates high fives and shouts. Innovative recipes, gluttonous portions, and unhealthy combinations are sources of amusement and solidarity. The ritual is a sacred routine for these two. While they are certainly not the only two to ever have a snack, the "late-night scrounge" is a practice that is meaningful for them. As a primary fixture of their routine, participating in this nightly cultural practice binds the pair.

Weather permitting, the "late-night scrounge" is combined with "catwalking"—a practice of sitting on the catwalk leading to the entrance to the firehouse for the purpose of informal socializing. "Catwalking" is an unstructured practice that has developed without institutional mandate. Firefighters often head out intending to just "burn one," smoking a cigarette or using another tobacco product, and end up conversing for an hour or two. Themes of discussion include reflection on moral or practical decision making on fire calls, inter-departmental politics, current gossip on other members, and discussions of hopes, expectations, and daily trials. For months, Gordon would rant about his job as an assistant in the emergency department of the hospital: "I fucking hate my job with the energy of a thousand suns." Smith sympathizes, "I feel ya bro. I pick up trash for a living." Smoking a cigarette and commiserating becomes a momentary reprieve from the responsibilities of life. It is a reliable interactional mechanism of belonging for these working-class guys. The catwalk is place to find community and "catwalking" is a grassroots practice that informally facilitates sustained belonging amongst participants.

These grassroots practices are powerful generators of belonging because they activate shared meanings that matter to participants, unlike some institutional rituals that can be devoid of meaning for those subjected to them. Grassroots practices found at Monacan, like the "late-night scrounge" and "catwalking," are shared within many institutions. These provide interactional mechanisms for the generation of community. Compared to institutional rituals that demand perfunctory compliance, these grassroots practices transpire on the terms of those present.

A group's own grassroots cultural practices develop through interaction, often in the breaks or gaps in action or in encounters where organizational culture is weak. The creation and repetition of an inside joke is a prime example of a grassroots ritual that binds participants. For example, FF Robinson, the winner of the "Honey Badger Award" discussed earlier in this chapter, is understood to be accident prone. In the course of her duties as a firefighter, she fell out of a second story window on to her back, got hit in the head with a fifty pound steel manifold when a valve was accidentally opened, and injured her knee to the point of requiring surgery. In all cases, she required visits to the emergency room. Inside jokes developed about her proclivity for injury. An "Out of Service" sign designed for fire apparatus is hung in her gear locker. When she approaches a training scenario, one of her long-time peers announces: "Stand back Firefighter Robinson, someone is raising a ladder. We don't want you to get hurt." Each comment of this sort brings about a laugh from the group and becomes compounded when one of the new people asks what is funny. There is a constant joking rapport related to Robinson's participation in cooking, cleaning, and routine work around the station. While she may have private feelings of marginalization due to these comments, she takes part in keeping the inside joke going as it provides a focal point for those present to bond. The activation of these shared understandings in the inside joke is an everyday practice that generates situational and sustained

belongings. Those who are "in the know" can take part, while new members lack an intimate knowledge of her history and cannot participate. For long-time members, this grassroots ritual activates shared cultural meanings to uphold community amongst those in its interactional context.

Grassroots practices develop organically amongst those who share encounters. Many of these rituals involve the collective, intimate activity of eating or relaxing together in unstructured or under-structured interaction. Regularly scheduled trips to the office Keurig, to the hospital cafeteria, a nightly or early morning trip to Dunkin' Donuts or Starbucks for those in the hospital, or frequenting establishments that offer free coffee for first responders are all grassroots practices that involve collective indulgence of stimulants or sugar-loaded treats. Similarly, medical residents and firefighters have "in house" sleeping rituals. It is common not only to self-identify sleeping arrangements as: "Girls-only Bunkroom" or to self-identify as the "no snoring room." It is common knowledge that the downstairs bunkroom at Monacan, informally called "The Ice Box" because of its relatively cold temperature, is where the longtime firefighters sleep. LT Barns proclaims, "The Ice Box is for swinging dicks only. It's too cold for any woman." Comments such as this are usually met with: "I know, right? It's the only place I ever sleep," "I gotta sleep in the box. If I don't hear everybody running down the stairs, then how am I supposed to know we got a call?" Grassroots identities are tied to qualities of the space, such as identifying as the "Ice Box Boys." These identities are tied to the grassroots practices of how the space is used. Being able to fall asleep fast, sleeping lightly, not sleeping through alarms, being able to transition quickly to alertness, and being able to operate without sleep all are everyday cultural practices that both firefighters and medical residents celebrate. These are not institutional rituals, but are the binding grassroots practices of these small groups.

In contexts that involve rigid institutional rituals, opportunities for grassroots practices are less common. Alliance CrossFit is one context with pervasive institutional rituals that structure most interactions in that context. Negotiating the highly regulated context, individuals create and maintain sustained communities of belonging by establishing ritualistic approaches to "how we do things." For example, during team workouts, certain individuals will partner based on their preferences and compatibility. Brice, a life-long weight lifter, and Jason, a lean, long-time runner, partner together for team workouts. For one workout that calls for the team to accomplish a 2000 meter row and 100 ground-to-overhead lifts, Brice comments, "So, are we going for it again? You do about three-quarters of the row? I'll get on in the middle to give you a break and I'll try to get through most of the lifts. Sound like a plan?" Jason agrees and the two exchange a fist bump prior to beginning the workout. These two ritualistically complete team workouts together to efficiently optimize their lifting and cardiovascular strengths. Working within the structuring limitations of institutional rituals, these two develop their own grassroots ritual. This pattern of behavior activates shared meanings between the two and generates an enduring connection, albeit less meaningful than those connections created within the unstructured spaces at Monacan or during the residents' relaxed periods of time.

Grassroots cultural practices provide an interactional mechanism for the production of sustained belonging. Engaging in joint actions that are imbued with shared meaning is binding for participants, especially in a particular sequence at a specific context. These grassroots practices breed deep identifications around an idiosyncratic group identity and specialized conduct. While the ritualistic behavior itself is binding, the activation of culture that is deeply meaningful to a small group is what gives power to these ritualistic practices and allows for the development of sustained belongings.

An Interactional Space to Belong

This chapter outlines the interactional ecology of belonging. I find that physical environment, intimacy, hardship, and interdependency are properties of encounters that produce situational belonging. These ecological qualities are not mutually exclusive, but overlap and act together to generate belonging in the moment or across chains of encounters. The presence of these properties in an encounter can be multiplicative in the consequence of belonging guaranteed for participants. When more belonging-facilitating conditions are present in the ecology of an encounter, there is a greater probability that there will be a net outcome of connection and identification with others in the situation.

Moving beyond a focus on the moment, the interactional ecology of encounters also shapes sustained belongings. Negotiating repeated conditions of situational belonging can generate enduring identifications over time. Expanding on chapter three's emphasis on culture, ritualistic encounters provide an interactional conduit for the activation of culture and the development of sustained belongings. I argue that there is value in drawing an analytical distinction between institutional rituals and grassroots cultural practices. Institutional rituals are better suited to integrating individuals into large collectives, but only if those are not empty rituals enacted by organizers onto a reluctant or alienated membership. On a smaller scale, grassroots practices have the potential to activate culture that is deeply meaningful for the group and capable of forging focused, durable connections. Though these grassroots belongings can be quite meaningful, these lack institutional support and are contingent upon continued opportunities for interaction.

I have not presented an exhaustive list of ways to belong, but I have drawn upon illustrative examples from three contexts to boost our understanding of how interactional ecology

yields situational and sustained belongings. The social backdrops of encounters deserve attention from sociologists (Gieryn 2000) as these provide limiting and enabling contexts for the production and exchange of culture in these settings (Blumer 1969; Goffman 1961b). As we see from the encounters within a hospital, a firehouse, and in the social world of CrossFit, the interactional ecology of encounters shapes opportunities for connecting with others.

Examining the interactional ecology of encounters helps sociologists to understand how multiple belongings can coexist. Instead of individuals who bring an unyielding set of dispositions that lead to belonging in particular contexts, it is the physical and social qualities of encounters that play a significant role in determining where people feel like they belong. Building on chapter three's discussion of the role of culture in belonging, this chapter has highlighted how the properties of encounters offer another lens to understand belonging. Meanwhile, chapter six shows how the interactional ecology of encounters induces inequality.

Chapter 5. The Cultural Architecture of Inequality

Culture not only provides a basis for belonging, but also for inequality. This research demonstrates how situational and sustained inequalities in face-to-face encounters are the products of institutional cultural infrastructures and grassroots cultural hierarchies. I find that situational inequalities are primarily the result of grassroots hierarchies of esteem and scorn, but that they may also be shaped by institutional distinctions. On the other hand, sustained inequalities are principally ordered by institutional distinctions. Yet, grassroots hierarchies of respect and stigma may mitigate these hierarchies, especially in encounters where institutional influence is weak. It is the enduring and interdependent qualities of institutions that make inequalities rooted in institutional distinctions more durable than those rooted in grassroots culture. These findings suggest that macro-inequalities do not paint a full picture of the lived experience of inequality in face-to-face encounters.

Introduction

On a steamy July evening, the 6:15 p.m. class—consisting of twelve tenured CrossFitters—convenes at Alliance CrossFit for a particularly lengthy and cardiovascularly intensive "Workout of the Day," or WOD. The whiteboard at the front of the box reads:

> 3 RFT: run 400m, 15 Burpee Box Jump Over 24", 100m Farmer Carry (70#/hand), 25 Wall Ball 20#[35]

This workout—three "Rounds for Time" of running, burpees over a box, a long farmer's carry, and some thigh-destroying wall balls—is a taxing one. As this is not the season of membership surges that are seen every January and the beginning of the school year, the dozen CrossFitters present are an experienced bunch. That is, all except for Tom, who has been pushed to participate in his first CrossFit class after a few weeks of learning basic movements in the "Essentials" classes, and Danny, who has only been doing CrossFit for about seven months.

In this particular WOD, several of the men begin the workout with a sprint, pulling ahead of the rest. Most others follow the trainer's advice to maintain a consistent pace for the workout

[35] This workout calls for all participants to complete three "Rounds for Time" or circuits of the exercises in one timed outing. Each cycle consists of a 400 meter run, 15 "Burpee Box Jump Overs," a 100 meter Farmer Carry, and 25 Wall Balls. A "Burpee Box Jump Over" consists of beginning in a standing position, dropping into a squat position, kicking feet back, touching one's chest to the ground, returning to the squat position, and jumping to the top of a 24 inch box. A Farmer's Carry consists of walking with a 70 pound kettlebell in each hand (140 pounds total) at one's side for 100 meters. A "Wall Ball" is a movement that takes a weighted medicine ball (of the twenty pound variety), held at the chest during a below-horizontal squat, completed with an extension and launch of the ball vertically to make contact with a ten-foot-high target.

and to "keep it at about 85% the whole time and try to keep the same pace for each round." Kendall—a hyper-competitive, bulky guy who is better built for weight-training than cardiovascular work—is the first to finish round one of the workout. During the second run, one of those following the trainer's 85% effort approach, Danny, passes Kendall who is losing momentum after a breakneck pace through the first round. Danny, a 29-year-old with a runner's build, takes the lead.

After passing Kendall, Danny's lead widens further. Danny has never finished first on a WOD before. Through the final round of the WOD, several of the CrossFitters offer words of encouragement in passing. Winded, Tom, the new guy, says, "Good job." Finishing his final farmer's carry, Kyle, a long-term fixture of the gym, comments, "Keep going. You'll finish first." As Danny enters back into the gym for his final twenty-five "wall balls," the trainer, Seth, claps and cheers to encourage all of us; he shouts: "Good job. Keep going. Push to the end." Danny is the first to finish the workout at 19:55. When I get in from my final run, I see him collapsed into a fetal position, winded for breath. His time is just ahead of the second-fastest at 20:12. I finish at 20:57. Tom finishes last with a time of 24:47.

Once Danny recovers enough to sit up, the trainer asks, "How was it?" Upholding the cultural conventions of communalism and anti-egotism, he comments, "It was tough. I almost fell apart on those farmer's carries." As everyone congregates around the whiteboard at the front of the gym, Scott, the general manager who has a habit of meandering about the gym making small talk, strikes up a conversation with Danny, the top performer on the WOD:

> Scott: "Good job man, you did well today."
> Danny: "I'll see you in the morning too."
> Scott: "Yeah, you've been coming in most mornings, haven't you?"
> Danny: "So, I've been five times a week for the past three weeks."
> Scott: "That's great man. You're really developing."
> Danny: "Well, I don't know about that. I've felt sore ever since I started coming here. My girlfriend literally has to carry me down stairs. I'm a mess."

Scott: "[laughing]… Sounds like progress to me."

After packing up boxes, kettlebells, and wall balls, everyone comes to the whiteboard to post their times. Each individual's completion time is recorded on the whiteboard, allowing for easy comparison of performances. Danny receives a few fist bumps and congratulations from others in the workout before retiring to the exchange of small talk with a few of his closer gym buddies. Their smiles and jocular body language suggest they are either congratulating or teasing him about finishing at the front of the pack.

At this point, the Essentials class, a segregated class for new recruits who are learning the foundational movements of CrossFit, emerges from the lower floor of the gym. They are being led by their trainer back to the front of the gym. Upon seeing Tom, the fresh graduate of the Essentials class, Joe, the regular Essentials trainer, gestures for his class to stop. With all of their attention, he begins to make a spectacle of Tom. In an exaggerated and playful tone one would use to gain the attention of a toddler, Joe feigns excitement: "Oooooh, look at Tom. He graduated and did the regular class today." Everyone claps, some supportively and some half-heartedly. Holding the entire class up, Joe asks, "So, how was it?" Soaked in sweat, Tom replies, "I came in last, but I finished." Looking at the fresh faces, Joe points over his shoulder toward Tom and jokes: "Look how sweaty they are. That's what you have to look forward to." The trainer opens a facetious dialogue with Tom to play up the laidback culture of the gym and to demonstrate that determination is the most important qualification for participating in the regular class.

This vignette can be explained in terms of cultural and interactional properties that result in situational and sustained belongings, but this is not solely a tale of belonging. In this encounter, like most, it is also a tale of inequality. Culture brings people together, but it also provides a basis for hierarchy. The culture of CrossFit walks a fine line of engaging people's

competitive spirit, while tempering the consequences of overly stimulated competition with formal regulation and informal community. Yet, the space is permeated with formal and informal hierarchies and the face of inequality is shaped by institutional and grassroots hierarchies. In this instance, institutional distinctions based on objective performance are juxtaposed against those grassroots practices of esteem and respect for form, performance, and character. Taken together, these structure the cultural architecture of inequality at Alliance.

Hierarchy is further institutionalized in Alliance CrossFit's "open to everyone" community. Beyond a division of labor and formal hierarchy among the staff, there is an objective, formal, institutionalized hierarchy upheld among gym patrons by gym management.[36] Regular CrossFitters and those in the Essentials class are segregated by skill level; those in the regular class work out in the main space of the gym, whereas "the Essentials people" work in a semi-attached room referred to as "downstairs." This spatial segregation upholds a durable hierarchy that divides CrossFitters into two formal classes: "CrossFitters" and "Essentials students."

Moreover, in keeping with the traditions of the national CrossFit organization, the staff documents, and thus imposes, a hierarchy of individualized achievement of weights and times on the whiteboard at the front of the gym. These times remain posted for the entire week and sometimes even end up on the Alliance website or social media account for posterity. This is a form of situational inequality; depending on the programming, one might come out on top one day and near the bottom on the following day. For better or for worse, every CrossFitter must record their performance in this public forum for all to see. There is no mystery concerning

[36] The general manager and trainers have formal, institutionalized positions of power to impose cultural regulations on CrossFit patrons and staff. This is a form of sustained inequality. The general manager sets the rules of the gym and prescribes workouts. The trainers lead warm-ups, workouts, and have authority to instruct patrons to remove weights and prescribe "punishment burpees" for late arrivals. The employees of the business are gatekeepers that, sometimes uncomfortably, wield authority over customers that are paying for their services and community.

where one falls in the spectrum of corporeal performance as these times and weights stay posted all week. In turn, this institutionalized inequality establishes a cultural hierarchy of achievement with criteria based on the values found in the organization more generally.

Most CrossFitters do not resist this hierarchy; no one enforces participation and membership is voluntary. Trainers' positions of authority offer institutional distinction, but this authority is also paired with the grassroots interpersonal respect given by patrons. Most trainers embody the corporeal excellence that earns grassroots esteem or respect amongst CrossFitters.

In the opening vignette, it is clear that the general manager is impressed by Danny's efforts. Danny has yet to achieve any sort of the commanding, physical excellence that I discuss above, but his efforts have nevertheless gained the interest, attention, and (perhaps even the) respect of the GM, Scott. While there are others better at CrossFit than Danny, his effort deserves esteem in the moment. Similarly, while it is in Scott's interest to retain Danny's business, his adulation is likely a genuine appreciation of Danny's efforts to achieve through the cultural conventions of CrossFit.

This interpersonal esteem is rooted in culturally-specific estimations of appearances, personality, material goods, actions, knowledge, and more. Most CrossFitters look up to those who respect the core values of CrossFit: corporeal excellence and communality. Indeed, those in Danny's position earn esteem in the moment, but this esteem may mature into enduring respect if the individual continues to perform at a high level and dedicate her- or himself to the culturally valued goals of CrossFit.

Through this introduction I have outlined how inequality at Alliance is a result of institutional distinctions and grassroots esteem. In this chapter, I examine the cultural architecture of inequality more generally. I argue that culture cannot be singularly

conceptualized as a binding force. Culture is also a currency of inequality. From this analytical perspective, encounters can be understood as arenas of inequality where the possession of embodied or material culture provides a basis for qualitative or quantitative hierarchies. I map how the cultural architectures of both situational and sustained inequalities are composed of institutional distinctions and grassroots esteem. More specifically, I show how situational inequalities are primarily the result of grassroots esteem or scorn, while sustained inequalities are mainly upheld by institutional distinctions.

Sustained inequalities endure, independent of individual constituents, because they have durable institutional foundations. There is interplay between macro-cultural inequalities and organizational inequalities in brick-and-mortar institutions and their interactions. In modernity, social class structures life opportunities, but it only sometimes correlates with inequalities in face-to-face encounters (cf. Leondar-Wright 2014). In institutions like Southern Health, organizational distinctions are highly correlated with social class. In organizations like Alliance CrossFit, institutional distinctions instead develop around quick times and heavy lifts in the gym. These achievements are only tangentially related to social class. An understanding of cultural inequality in either context must attend to the fact that systems of institutional distinctions may also be nested within one another, creating a matrix of cultural hierarchies. However, this is not quite like a Russian Matryoshka doll; it is far messier. These hierarchies overlap and sometimes contradict one another, while only becoming salient in select situations.[37] When multiple institutionalized hierarchies align, a system of inequality becomes powerful and unyielding.

Grassroots inequalities create cultural hierarchies organized by the amalgamated esteem produced by those who constitute interactions. Whether this esteem consists of respect or stigma,

[37] Chapter six, "The Interactional Ecology of Inequality," outlines how qualities of contexts generate pursuits of inequality.

these assessments reveal the interpersonal cultural foundations of inequality at the group level. Grassroots inequalities are malleable and can provide an impetus for resistance, cultural change, or upheaval of existing institutional inequalities. These qualities also make them flexible and capable of capturing the ebbs and flows of esteem that are bound to the action of day-to-day encounters. It is this same flexibility that is also their weakness. Grassroots inequalities lack an institutional foundation, giving these fleeting, changing, and often-contradictory qualities. As a result, the various belongings and individualistic pursuits that people bring to encounters are unlikely to culminate in enduring structures of amalgamated esteem. In institutions where participation is obligatory, grassroots inequalities can order achievement and failure in moments of weak institutional influence or of relatively unstructured interaction.

In sum, this chapter demonstrates how situational and sustained inequalities in face-to-face encounters are the product of institutional cultural infrastructures and grassroots cultural hierarchies. Existing sociological accounts of stratification systems do not give access to nor focus on the inequalities that transpire in the action of face-to-face interaction. But as these findings suggest, macro-inequalities do not paint a full picture of inequality. To fully understand the lived experience of inequality, it is necessary to attend to how institutional distinctions and grassroots culture shape inequality in encounters.

In doing so, I will first introduce the cultural architecture of each context, move on to discuss how culture shapes situational inequalities, and then review the role of culture in sustained inequalities. I conclude with a discussion of how grassroots and institutional culture constitute systems of cultural inequalities that enliven a static conception of inequality.

Three Cultural Architectures of Inequality

As I outlined in my opening vignette, the cultural architecture of inequality at CrossFit is one where there is little tension between institutionalized and grassroots inequalities. In line with the communal cultural infrastructure of this context, the overt institutional distinctions are paired with a collectivist culture that negates the negative consequences of hierarchy. Behind the scenes, institutional inequality has a functional role for the organization. A division of labor and responsibilities among managers and trainers facilitates efficient delivery of services and maintenance of a communal atmosphere. Amongst CrossFitters, a hierarchy of corporeal achievement drives people to achieve an optimal performance—to achieve relative to their peers and in relation to one's past selves within the structured competitions of the context. Cultural values of achievement and competition create objective measures of hierarchy. However, these competitions fail to brew conflicts due to the mediating influence of Alliance's strong collectivist culture. In other words, the culture of belonging in CrossFit quiets individualistic status claims. In this context, situational inequalities are thus carefully managed to encourage CrossFitters to work harder to achieve, but in a manner that does not undermine the collective or result in the dissolution of the group.

The cultural architecture of inequality at Southern Academic Health System is quite different. Institutional inequalities are entrenched in job titles and one's level of training. In an academic health center, there is a hierarchy of supervision: attending physicians, fellows, residents, and medical students, in that order. Amongst those in the trajectory to become physicians, medical students fall at the bottom of this institutionalized hierarchy, due in part to a dearth of cultural expertise. Beyond physicians, the hierarchy of nurses, support staff, and technicians complicates this institutional inequality. These institutional distinctions maintain

fixed and enduring sustained inequalities, but these do not always order hierarchy in a given moment. The support staff occupies a lower place in the formal hierarchy of the hospital, but often possesses skills and knowledge that garner respect from others. For example, a medical student may be unable to get a pulse on an obese patient, whereas a nurse, who has the ear and experience, is more likely to have success. In sum, a rigid, formal, institutionalized organizational hierarchy structures sustained belongings in this context, but this stands in tension with grassroots esteem rooted in one's work ethic and competence at one's craft.

The cultural architecture of inequality in the volunteer fire service similarly features a disconnection between institutional distinctions and grassroots inequalities. Much like a healthcare center, institutional distinctions are rooted in a twofold cultural infrastructure: (1) a para-military hierarchy from chief to probationary junior firefighter and (2) institutional certifications that qualify one to perform particular roles. Much like the hospital, amalgamated esteem built on respect, professional competence, or affinity provides grassroots inequalities that also order hierarchy in everyday interactions. In a volunteer department, there is often tension between these institutional and grassroots inequalities. For example, one can be in command of an incident or certified to drive, thus bestowing institutional distinction, but these distinctions are not always paired with the esteem or respect of one's peers. As a volunteer organization, Monacan is both a professional entity and a social fraternity. Thus, its hierarchy is subject to the social currents of its members. Interpersonal esteem and amalgamated respect therefore not only shape situational inequalities, but also allow grassroots inequalities to evolve into sustained inequalities.

As a core component for a sociology of encounters, I examine the role that culture plays in inequality. Drawing on encounters from these three field sites, I outline how grassroots culture

and institutional distinctions compose the cultural architectures of inequality that produce situational and sustained inequalities.

Cultural Architecture of Situational Inequalities

As seen already, culture plays a significant role in situational inequalities. In an encounter, there are macro- and meso-level institutional inequalities that impose hierarchy upon the situation and its participants. Meanwhile, these exist in dialogue with the hierarchies of those who inhabit encounters. These grassroots inequalities are composed of positive esteem and negative scorn. In stable institutions, these institutional and grassroots hierarchies are in alignment, but in periods of organizational change or when organizational culture is weak, these hierarchies are often misaligned.

Grassroots Inequalities and Situational Belonging

Most inequality is the result of strategic or benign actions of the individuals who navigate encounters. In the moment, esteem and scorn are the sum judgments of others. Of course esteem and scorn activate existing cultural dispositions from ties to and experiences with macro- and meso-level social institutions. However, this matrix of cultural affiliations becomes amalgamated into unique cocktails of inequality in the moment. This amalgamation results in meaningful inequalities within the encounter. Social assessments, whether positive or negative, mobilize meanings associated with embodied or material culture to generate inequality.

Esteem. Esteem is momentary admiration. Within the bounds of an encounter, esteem is the feeling or display of veneration towards another. In the moment, this often occurs around the possession and activation of material or embodied culture. Amongst the three contexts where I observed encounters, material culture was often a source of esteem, but embodied culture tended

to yield greater returns of esteem for the individual. In all three contexts, the amalgamation of esteem amongst those present in an interaction is consequential for inequality in the moment.

Custom Reebok Nano shoes at CrossFit, Allen Edmonds in the hospital, and duty boots purchased with one's own funds at Monacan are examples of footwear—pieces of material culture—that yield esteem in each context. A printed T-shirt from a competition at CrossFit, a custom radio bandolier with one's name printed on the strap at the firehouse, or a Littman stethoscope are material objects, purchased or acquired in some manner, that gain attention and esteem in face-to-face encounters.

Of the three contexts where I did fieldwork, Southern Medical was the most regulated regarding limitations on the sorts of material culture displays that were allowed. Shoes, jewelry (depending on department and task), and one's stethoscope were the material objects that were discussed as valuable. For new medical students, the stethoscope was discussed as if it were bound to one's professional identity. Just prior to second-year, when medical students usually begin their rotations and get their first taste of providing patient care, the topic of stethoscope purchase became a top priority for medical students:

> Gupta: "My Dad is buying me a stethoscope."
> Chomat: "You're getting the Littman II?
> Gupta: "I'm not sure. He's been practicing [medicine] for like thirty years. I think he can handle it."
> Wu: "What? Do you want to be a cardiologist? That's for cardiologists. You aren't gonna be listening for the stuff they're listening for. Just get a cheap one."
> Chomat: "Trust me. You don't want to be the dude with the dollar store stethoscope. Seriously, have some pride."

Chomat's comments hint at the value attributed to the selection of a stethoscope. Material cultural objects, like this tool, are a source of pride. While not everyone attributes the same amount of value to material culture, like a stethoscope, many see these as pieces of culture that define one's specialization. In many ways, it is a proxy for one's identity and status.

Stethoscopes are examples of material culture that can generate esteem among physicians, but it is unlikely that anyone in other contexts would care this deeply about stethoscopes. Esteem is rooted in the value systems of those who constitute the encounters. The culture that yields esteem varies depending upon the context, the perspectives of those involved in the encounter, and the action that is transpiring in the moment.

Though situational esteem often accrues around material culture, the materiality of the culture itself—the fact that it is inherently distanced from the self—makes it a poor, long-term conveyor thereof. An object can focus attention in the moment, but it is more likely to simply gain attention rather than earn respect. Material culture can be lost or sold, which makes it a shaky foundation for sustained inequalities.

For the CrossFit community, esteem cannot be bought or sold. Shirts from competitions may give one the appearance of experience and appropriate footwear may demonstrate a desire to fit in and dedication to the workouts, but it is strength, endurance, or skill—forms of corporeal excellence—that earn esteem. In other words, embodied culture earns greater esteem than material culture. On one occasion, like so many others, one individual will perform a movement that garners the attention of others. Though it is an arbitrary threshold, being able to do an overhead lift of one's bodyweight earns the esteem of those in the gym. An example of this is when Casey—a late-twenty-something guy with a history of self-guided, primarily cardiovascular workouts—was only able to lift 95 pounds overhead when he began CrossFit. Over a year later, his form and ability developed to a point that he was flirting with the threshold of getting his 165-pound bodyweight overhead. During a strength training exercise, Casey tells me, "I think I can do it. Give me ten more [pounds]." We load up the bar to 165 pounds. Leaving my bar unattended, I stand by to watch him, but he spends a minute resting, staring at the bar in

silence, psyching himself into the necessary mindset to lift. This attracts attention from a few of the regulars and the trainer who have gathered around. Without saying anything, he lifts the barbell out of the rack, takes a big bend in the knees and hips to power the bar up, stumbles backward a step, and gets the weight overhead. Everyone cheers. As soon as he drops the weight, two of the guys give him a high-five. The trainer asks, "Is that a P.R. [personal record]?" Casey affirms the claim. Another guy says, "Congrats bro. That's a lot of weight." As these congratulations transpire, one of the newer members comments to me: "God I can't imagine doing bodyweight. That's like fifty more pounds than I can do." Consequently, Casey's "P.R." earns the momentary esteem of those present for the lift.

Esteem, like for Casey's "P.R." lift, is only momentary. He has broken zero CrossFit or Alliance records. Yet, in the collectivist culture of CrossFit, individual achievements are celebrated; his lift garnered esteem in the moment based on the cultural conventions of the group. As the skill and corporeal excellence that is required to complete the lift is a result of long-term effort, individual skill, and internal discipline, it is seen as a worthy source of esteem. It cannot be feigned or disassociated from the individual. Unlike material culture, such as a pair of shoes, corporeal excellence cannot be bought. Nevertheless, any isolated instance of esteem is fleeting and temporary. Corporeal excellence is a form of embodied culture that is the product of culturally valued work. Based on the value system of those at CrossFit, the esteem Casey receives is genuine, though momentary.

Other qualities that earn esteem in the moment are idiosyncratic to the group. For example, vomiting during a CrossFit workout is one rite of passage. CrossFit has a number of named WODs that provide a sense of continuity across various affiliate gyms. One of these is "The Filthy Fifty:"

For time:
50 Box jumps, 24 inch box
50 Jumping pull-ups
50 Kettlebell swings, 45 pounds
50 Walking Lunges
50 Knees to elbows
50 Push press, 45 pounds
50 Back extensions
50 Wall ball shots, 20 pound ball
50 Burpees
50 Double-unders

This is the "Filthy Fifty" WOD as prescribed for men.[38] Completing the workout earned one member the esteem of others in the moment, not for corporeal excellence, but for effort. In this instance, I am performing this workout with about ten other patrons. A newer member—a twenty-something named Nate—starts out strong, keeping pace with the pack. But upon entering the final third of the workout, he begins to slow considerably. Indeed, most of the other CrossFitters have finished as he begins his burpees. After about a dozen, he stops, and runs to the open freight doors of the repurposed building to throw up. As he catches his breath, the trainer, Joe, approaches him to ask: "Are you alright? When you can, get back on those burpees. You can't let the WOD beat you." Nate heads back over and slowly progresses through his final thirty Burpees, and then the double-unders. Nate's completion, the last in the class by more than four minutes, leads to a big round of applause from everyone in the gym. He collapses to the ground, and while lying flat on his back, gasps for air. The trainer comments, "Great job, Nate. You got through it." Barely able to get out the words, he replies, "I puked." Joe replies with a smile: "There's no shame in that. It's a badge of honor in here." In CrossFit culture, it is not just corporeal excellence that garners esteem, but also effort. In this case, Nate's willingness to push himself to the point of vomiting in an effort to belong at CrossFit is a reflection of his character and is a source of esteem in the moment.

[38] Most workouts that involve weights have separate conventions for men and women. I will discuss how these gendered differences relate to inequality later in this chapter.

Across all contexts, these situational instances of esteem are nonetheless fleeting. Having the right gadget or completing a good lift is the extent of many people's achievement—a momentary admiration. In some cases though, a record of estimable performances can coalesce into respect—a form of sustained inequality.

Scorn. Scorn is negative grassroots esteem or disdain in the moment. It reflects a disjuncture between an individual or an individual's performance and the conventional expectations of an individual or group. Like positive esteem, scorn is a momentary assessment of an individual bound to the encounter, though in this case, the assessment is negative.

In the fire service, for example, scorn often emerges around a lack of embodied knowledge. In one instance, Drew, a seventeen year old junior member with about a year of experience, is on alarm activation at a senior-living complex with an engine company of four released firefighters. On the call, it is clear that there is no fire emergency; there is no smoke, just an ear-piercing audible alarm and strobe lights sounding—a routine false alarm. At the scene, two of the released firefighters are inside investigating the structure looking for signs of fire. LT Gordon and I attempt to secure access to the alarm panel through a locked interior door. Lastly, the junior member Drew is outside as he is not certified to enter a potentially IDLH (Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health) environment. Gordon, who is in charge, heads to the external door of the structure and shouts: "Hey Drew, grab me a shove-knife and bring it in here." In the meantime, Gordon and I take turns attempting to use a pocketknife to create a gap between the door and its frame in order to pop it open. After about two minutes, Drew has still not brought the forcible entry tool into the building. With the alarm blaring, Gordon gets flustered and walks back to the exterior door of the structure to find that Drew has all of the compartments open on the driver's side of the fire engine. He yells, "What are you doing?" Drew replies, "I'm looking

for the shove-knife." Gordon shakes his head and walks to retrieve it himself. Drew offers an apology, but the lieutenant does not acknowledge his comments with a response. With a grimace and in stonewall silence, he retrieves one of the three shove-knives himself. Upon re-entering the structure, he comes to me, still trying to force the door with the pocket knife. He takes over with the shove-knife and defeats the locking mechanism. Immediately he silences and resets the alarm panel. He turns to me with a serious face and says:

> I don't know what the fuck his problem is. He's been here for like a year and doesn't know his god damn equipment. That's like his only job. There's three of these fucking things on the truck. Learn your shit, seriously.

In this situation, Drew earns negative esteem—scorn from his lieutenant. His lack of embodied culture that is valued in the encounter, in this case knowledge of equipment on the engine, leads to a lower opinion of him in the moment.

Like all instances of esteem, scorn is also bound to a specific encounter. At the level of the individual, scorn can vary from mild to significant. At the group level, collective scorn is more consequential than the scorn of one individual. When a pattern of scorn attribution develops across a chain of encounters, it can culminate into a stigma—a sustained form of inequality.

In sum, I have argued that situational inequality can be the result of grassroots esteem or scorn. This can be acquired from material culture or embodied culture. Though the value of any display or quality is contingent on the conventions of the group, material culture is often dismissed as mere display. Meanwhile, embodied characteristics, such as one's corporeal constitution at CrossFit and specialized knowledge amongst physicians, are qualities that are intrinsic to the self that may cultivate genuine esteem. Of course, amalgamated esteem and scorn of those constituting the encounter are not the only bases of inequality. I turn our attention now to how institutionalized cultural inequalities shape hierarchy in encounters.

Institutional Situational Inequalities

While grassroots inequalities rooted in esteem or scorn play a significant role in momentary hierarchies, these are intersected by meso- and macro-level institutional structures. It is important to understand how these institutional foundations provide top-down structures to facilitate and limit grassroots hierarchies created by the constituents of encounters.

Organizational distinctions. Meso-level organizations, such as Alliance, Monacan, and Southern all create their own internal organizational distinctions. These provide powerful cultural structures of inequality in encounters. Though these operate in dialogue with macro-institutional hierarchies and grassroots inequalities, organizational distinctions are cultural structures that shape hierarchy in encounters.

The para-military hierarchy of the fire service illustrates a system of institutional distinctions and their result on inequality in an organization. The primary organizational distinctions in this context are certification, rank, and assignment. These distinctions serve to create overlapping institutional hierarchies that structure inequality in the fire service.

Certifications are institutional markers of embodied cultural capital—knowledge and ability to execute a skill. Released firefighters who may enter an IDLH environment must have state certifications in Firefighter I and Hazardous Material Operations. Emergency Vehicle Operations, Basic Pump Operations, Rural Water Supply, and Basic Pump Operations courses are prerequisites for becoming an engine operator. From the standpoint of inequality in encounters, these are institutionalized markers of distinction that are intended to represent stocks of culturally-valued, embodied culture.

Rank is one's title and position in the fire service. Monacan has a clear and absolute hierarchy of ranks: Chief, Assistant Chief, Battalion Chief, Captain, Lieutenant, Senior

Firefighter, Firefighter, Rookie Firefighter, Probationary Member, and Junior Member. These institutional statuses come with material markers of cultural distinction. Chiefs wear white shirts, officers (those who are captains and lieutenants) wear gray, and everyone else wears blue. Additionally, chiefs wear white helmets, officers wear yellow, released and senior firefighters wear black, rookie firefighters wear black with a red shield, and finally, probationary and junior members wear a red helmet of a slightly different shape. These institutionalized cultural markers allow for easy identification of one's rank. Though rank highly correlates with level of certification, it is the most institutionally significant marker of distinction.[39]

Finally, assignments offer another form of institutional distinction through bestowal of responsibilities. Given either for a shift or on the scene of an emergency, each assignment carries specific duties and responsibilities that presume certain competencies. On an engine, assignment to Seat 2 means that the person is "Officer in Charge" or OIC of an apparatus. This means the person chosen is presumed to be competent at navigating the apparatus to the scene and to command the scene until a chief officer arrives. Similarly, the assignment of Seat 3 bears the responsibility (and presumption) of being a competent nozzleman should the call necessitate fire suppression. These assignments are institutionally imposed distinctions on those operating in these roles, which presume a certain level of competence and ability.

On the scene of a major incident, institutional distinctions, such as rank, assignment, and certification, intersect to produce situational inequality. In one instance, for example, Monacan gets an alarm for an oven fire in a townhome. This sort of alarm enlists Monacan's two engines, an engine and ladder company from another station, and multiple chiefs.

[39] Brunsma (2005) highlights the complexities of how uniforms can both emphasize hierarchy and solidify community.

Engine 2 is first on scene. FF Keller, who is riding "the seat" on the engine, gives an on-scene report of conditions from the exterior of the structure: "Engine 2 is on scene of a two story town home. Light smoke showing from side alpha. Captain Bundy will be in command." Following department standard operating guidelines, FF Keller fulfills her responsibility of making a report and then places the senior officer on scene in command.

Walking past a man who is standing outside the home pointing to the door and shouting in a language other than English, Firefighters Keller and Pratt make entry into the residence with a water can to investigate the fire emergency. Meanwhile, my assignment is to deploy a hose line to the door in case it is needed. Two probationary members begin "hitting the hydrant," a process that involves attaching a large-diameter hose from the hydrant to the engine. Captain Bundy gets the engine into pump gear and fulfills the role of command by ensuring that all these actions are happening in unison.

Anticlimactically, it turns out that the fire is contained to the oven, and in being so, is quickly extinguished using the water can. Within a minute of making entrance, the inside crew reports to command that the fire is out. Captain Bundy exercises his command and alerts to all other units that the fire is "knocked down" and all other incoming units can go back "in service."

Around this time, Chief Harris, the Monacan Battalion Chief with the longest tenure, arrives on scene. While reporting to Captain Bundy for my next assignment, I overhear his meeting with the chief. Offering deference to his superior, he asks, "Are you taking command?" The Chief replies, "Hell no. I'm not even here." Though it is within his rights, he does not assume command of the scene, presumably to avoid the paperwork that comes with being in command of an incident like this one.

By the close of this scene, order is brought to a hectic encounter through the implementation of formal hierarchy. Everyone present has an assignment or at least reports to an authority for one. Most importantly, someone is always in command, holding power to control the actions of others to accomplish specific objectives.

On the fireground, the institutional distinctions are of absolute importance. These uphold a hierarchy of inequality with an ultimate goal of efficiency in action and coordination in high stress encounters. In down times, such as when socializing around the firehouse, these organizational distinctions are not formally or informally emphasized in an effort to mitigate hierarchy and to forge belongings (see chapter three).

Monacan offers a paradigmatic military structure, but this is not dissimilar from the division of labor, power, and responsibility in the hospital. Meanwhile, CrossFit goes to great lengths to mitigate formal hierarchy and create what feels like an organic community. Yet, in all three contexts, rank, certifications, and assignments provide institutionalized distinctions that structure objective hierarchies in face-to-face encounters. In periods of organizational stability, these meso-institutional distinctions are, in most cases, correlated with grassroots hierarchies and macro-institutional cultural distinctions.

Macro-institutional distinctions. Social class, gender, race, religion, and nationality are a few of society's macro-cultural institutions that shape inequality in encounters. These macro-inequalities provide a latent structuring influence on inequality that can be activated in the action of the moment to generate hierarchy. While these macro-inequalities structure life chances, the lived experience of inequality transpires within institutions and is enacted through the practices of those who constitute encounters.

These overlapping inequalities are illustrated at Monacan, a working-class fire house in the American South wherein race and class remain salient distinctions. While the station operates under the policy of openness, the space is one that marginalizes those who do not fit the mold of being white and working-class. On one occasion, a five-person engine company is dispatched to a government subsidized apartment complex, at the request of the police department, to have a medic "declare" an unsuspicious death of a sixty-five year old female. No one goes inside other than the medic, who also happens to be the driver. Ten minutes later, the medic returns and comments: "Oh she's been dead for a while." As we pull off, there are four minority children who are hanging out on the sidewalk next to the apartment building of the victim, no doubt captivated by the presence of a fire engine and police in their complex. FF Lawrence, the firefighter riding seat two on this call, comments with an exaggerated exuberance, "Hi chocolates." No one says anything. Sitting across from me in the rear of the engine is Probationary Firefighter Jones, one of two black firefighters in our department. We lock eyes after this comment. His facial expression suggests a familiar discontent. FF Robinson, also in the rear of the engine breaks the silence and asks, "Are they related to the victim?" Lawrence replies, "God I hope not, I saw one of them twerking it." When we return to the station, I ask Lawrence about his comment. He laughs and tells me:

> God, I know. I forgot he was in the back. He's always so quiet. I forget he was back there. Usually when Jones is around, I try not to say too much bad shit about black people, just so he doesn't get all pissy.

Overt stances on races and their cultures as qualitatively superior or inferior are common at Monacan. Yet, there are no organizational distinctions involving race. It is the grassroots inequalities upheld by members that result in situational inequality along racial lines. On the fireground, organizational hierarchy is all that matters; it is a colorblind space. On the other

hand, the informal, social space of the firehouse allows issues like race to become a meaningful base for inequality in face-to-face encounters.

Similarly, the population of those pursuing a career in medicine is diverse. Among Southern Health physicians, there are equal parts men and women and about half of the students are non-whites, many from Eastern Asian and Indian lineages. The primary story of inequality in this context is one of class inequality. In the hospital, more broadly, there is a homology between class background and organizational distinctions that leads to infrequent intermixing of groups, even in the absence of any formal barriers. Southern Health is one such context where social class is highly correlated with the hierarchy of the institution. Physicians mostly come from upper- and upper-middle-class backgrounds, nurses come from middle- to working-class backgrounds, and those in a support role mostly come from working-class backgrounds. Thus, Southern's hierarchy of organizational distinctions is homologous with the hierarchy of social classes in American society. The cafeteria offers further insight into this lived experience of this hierarchy. In the main cafeteria of Southern, there are three options for food: the traditional food counter, a yogurt and smoothie establishment, and a sushi bar. While there is a bit of overlap, the physicians make up the vast majority of those getting sushi and smoothies. On one occasion, I am sitting at a table with two psychology residents and I ask about interactions with the nurses. Dr. Padilla launches into a monologue that spoke generally about "how things are" at Southern:

> You work with these people all day. So, yeah, you get to know them really well. [I ask about the cafeteria] …but when I come in here, they don't sit with us. They all go get their chicken sandwich or whatever and, sit with their friends and complain about how much they hate cleaning up shit all day. [laughs] I'm joking. I don't know. They want to complain about nurse things and I guess we want to complain about nurses.

While it might be possible that the nurses are avoiding him because he makes comments of this sort, the tables in the cafeteria are segregated between nurses and physicians. Dr. Padilla's comment marginalizes and devalues the work of nurses, hinting at a boundary that he maintains between these groups. The result is a self-selected hierarchy due to peer networks, dietary

preferences, and occupational roles within the organization. Class does not formally structure the context. Rather, it leads to occupational trajectories and embodied tastes that are the bases of situational stratification. Underlying these egalitarian interactions, social class is a latent institutional source of inequality in face-to-face encounters. This sort of latent guidance into class-based occupational trajectories is consequently paired with the overt and hierarchal practices of those who constitute these encounters.

Alliance CrossFit is also a seemingly egalitarian institution open to anyone, yet gender remains a salient distinction. Most workouts have differently prescribed weights for men and women, reifying a gender binary. For example, the "Filthy Fifty" workout mentioned earlier in this chapter is posted at Alliance with scaled weights. Relative to the men's workout, women are prescribed to complete box jumps on a box that is four inches shorter, to use a wall ball that is six pounds lighter, and to complete all barbell movements with a barbell that is ten pounds lighter. In practice, one's ability to lift weights is much less a function of gender than of one's skill and effort exerted in the gym.

After the "Filthy Fifty" workout, everyone approaches the large whiteboard at the front of the gym to report their scores. Like many other occasions, a twenty-four year old woman with a record of regional-level competition finishes ahead of all the men. When she reports her time of 22:38, the trainer asks, "Did you do women's Rx?" She replies, "Yeah." Devaluing her performance, he replies, "Ohh… well, I bet that made those wall balls go a lot quicker." This comment tarnishes her first-place performance, suggesting that it is not on par with the performance of the slower but heavier performances of the men in the class. Society's institutionalized binary and non-comparable model of gender is incorporated into the

organizational practices of CrossFit. Nevertheless, it is the grassroots practices of individuals in face-to-face encounters that bestow meaning on differences to produce inequalities.

I have offered examples of how macro-institutional cultural distinctions shape inequality in encounters. Additionally, I have demonstrated how these macro-institutional distinctions are often institutionalized in meaningful ways in the meso-level organizations that people inhabit. In a general sense, situational inequalities are microcosms of macro-inequalities. Yet, these macro-inequalities do not omnisciently produce inequality. It is only through institutional culture and grassroots actions that inequalities are realized in encounters. More enduring forms of inequality, which I term sustained inequalities, also have grassroots and institutional foundations in the action of encounters.

Cultural Architecture of Sustained Inequalities

Inequalities often endure beyond the bounds of encounter. Chains of incidents involving grassroots inequalities of esteem or scorn end up graduating into durable inequalities of respect and stigma. These grassroots sustained inequalities operate in dialogue with tiers of institutional cultural infrastructures that provide powerful, sustained systems of stratification in social institutions. The enduring and interdependent qualities of institutions make institutional cultural inequalities more resilient than inequalities solely based on people's grassroots cultural practices. Within most encounters, the cultural architecture of inequality is a product of juxtaposed institutional and grassroots cultural hierarchies. These cultural hierarchies overlap and are nested within one another to create a durable system of inequality.

Grassroots Sustained Inequalities: Respect and Stigma

Respect and stigma are sustained forms of esteem and scorn. Grassroots inequalities create cultural hierarchies of amalgamated esteem that exist in the minds of others who constitute

encounters. Whether this esteem consists of respect or stigma, these assessments amount to the cultural roots of sustained inequality at the group level. These develop from encounters in one of two ways: (1) chains of inequality-inducing encounters and (2) moments of magnified esteem or scorn.

There are strengths and weaknesses to inequalities rooted in the minds of those who constitute an encounter. Grassroots inequalities are malleable and can provide an impetus for resistance, cultural change, or upheaval of existing institutional structures of inequality. These qualities also make them flexible and capable of capturing the ebbs and flows of esteem that are bound to the action of day-to-day encounters. This same flexible quality is also their flaw. Grassroots inequalities lack an institutional infrastructure to give them durability. This gives them a transitory quality; these can be fleeting, changing, and even contradictory. The wide range of identifications that people bring with them to interactions paired with individualistic pursuits make durable structures of inequality an unlikely product of amalgamated esteem. In moments of institutional weakness or absence, grassroots inequalities can order achievement and failure. In small groups or when all of those present have homogenous levels of institutional inequalities, grassroots inequalities also dominate.

Respect. Respect is enduring esteem or durable prestige that exists in the minds of others. In many cases, respect is commensurate with institutional inequalities, but this is not always the case. In periods of change, conflict, or unsettled group culture, respect can be quite independent of distinction imposed by institutions.

In the fire service, respect comes from experience. Firefighters look up to other firefighters who have experience, are knowledgeable, and conduct themselves efficiently on the fireground. In firefighter parlance, this is referred to as being “salty,” that is, seasoned with

experience. At Monacan, LT Hargrove, a life-member of the station who has never given up his weekly duty shift or moved into a chief position, is revered. FF Richardson comments on Hargrove's leadership: "On C Crew, you've got Hargrove who's like the old salty dog, who knows how to get shit done. You know if shit went down, Hargrove could handle it." In addition to two decades of experience, Hargrove gets respect for refusing to advance beyond the position of lieutenant, allowing him to remain on an active duty crew. His wealth of embodied knowledge and his selfless service earn admiration.

Across all three contexts where I did fieldwork, people were admired for excellence and experience at their crafts. A different lieutenant at Monacan commented on a trainer who is in his fifth decade of firefighting: "Regis can be a real pain in the ass, but you gotta have a lot of respect for the guy. He used to fight fires back before they wore SCBAs [self-contained breathing apparatus]. That's a lot of experience." Similarly, the chief of Monacan comments on another firefighter who was offering a clinic on technical rescue: "John Burns has been doing this shit forever. That dude used to repel on marijuana vines. [technical rescue rope made of hemp] He's the one who trained our chiefs back in the 70s and he basically created the state technical rescue curriculum. That's all him." Hargrove, Regis, and Burns all have earned respect because of their experience and dedication to their craft. Knowledge, experience, embodied cultural capital, and specialized skills make one "salty" and earn respect in the eyes of other firefighters.

In medicine, experience earns respect, but the rapid technological advances on the frontier of modern medicine have made many of those working in private practices obsolete. Several medical students told horror stories of physicians in family medicine who practice in rural areas. One resident characterized a family medicine rotation disparagingly: "it's like you

time warped back to a dystopian 1985." Similarly, a medical student planning to go into surgery offered an account of time spent on rotation at a small, non-academic hospital in Appalachia:

> I didn't appreciate how great we had it here at Southern until I did my rotation at [Appalachian hospital]. It was horrible. The physicians there were a different breed than we have here. You had two types. There were the crusty old fossils that are totally outdated and there were all these doctors who got their degrees overseas who were just horrible at medicine. If I ever lived out in a rural area, I think I'd get "fly me out" tattooed on my chest. I wouldn't want anyone in that place to even take my blood pressure.

These comments suggest that experience alone is not sufficient for respect in a field that is constantly evolving.

Respect also comes from selflessness and service. In a happenstance meeting between a young firefighter and a state trainer, the trainer inquires after seeing the name on his fire gear: "You're Billy Dunn's son? Your daddy is a hero; he did anything for his men." Caught in a moment of remembered esteem, he goes on to tell a story about Dunn "serving" as chief and fighting an uphill political battle with a frugal county government to secure funding for department resources. Contrary to glorified narratives depicted in popular culture, this type of investment of human capital and service for one's "brothers" yields the ultimate level of respect.

Respect also comes from a much more intimate form of selflessness and service. It is bred through emotional support practiced for one's peers in response encounters involving death, trauma, and madness. After responding to a 5:50 a.m. cardiac arrest FF Carden, who also works as an intensive care nurse, reached out to me. It was my first cardiac arrest, and it is quite possible that I was wearing signs of trauma on my face. As we were putting away our gear, he commented: "Everybody deals with that differently. I don't know how you're wired, but if you want to talk about it, I'm here." In the fire service, this practice does not generate public accolades. Rather, the outcome is shared respect for the behind-the-scenes work required to

support a firefighter in their time of need. [40] Service of this sort does not make the news or get acknowledged in awards ceremonies, but earns one lasting admiration in a close-knit group. This is also an example of a momentary event that earns an individual enduring respect that reaches far beyond a specific encounter.

Stigma. Stigma is enduring scorn. This is an enduring form of grassroots inequality that develops from a pattern of offenses that receive scorn or one egregious event that remains indefinitely in the minds of others. While respect involves excelling at culturally valued qualities, stigma typically involves a pattern of shortcomings rooted in one's character or actions based on the institutionalized cultural conventions of the collective.

Medicine, especially at an elite institution like Southern, is a field full of individuals who pride themselves on being professional. One medical student and turned pediatrics resident, Dr. Williams, is stigmatized for being an alcoholic. A medical school peer describes him:

> Everyone kind of thinks [Williams] is a joke. He's really an embarrassment for us as a program, always out being out drunk at the university, showing up to things smelling like alcohol with his eyes glazed over. I honestly don't know how he does it. I love the guy; seriously, he's a sweetheart. But, that kind of behavior is just unprofessional. And he wants to go into [pediatrics]. Who's gonna want their kids getting examined by some drunk?

Williams' behavior becomes stigmatized because it is a recurring issue that is not in keeping with the conventions of the organization. While Williams did not receive formal institutional sanctions for this behavior, the consequence for his pattern of behavior was grassroots attribution of stigma.

At Monacan, the behavior of one firefighter/EMT earned enduring stigma for a few instances of behavior that were not in alignment with the conventions of the fire service. Probationary Firefighter Peterson, a forty year old single male, was framed as a pedophile and a

[40] In all contexts, women are more likely to perform the work to maintain these enduring bonds, often entailing significant emotional labor (Hochschild 1983). This sort of gendered work gives insight into other forms of inequality that could be the subject of an entirely different dissertation.

closeted homosexual by the firefighters at Monacan for a series of late-night text messages. In a gathering on the catwalk of the station, Firefighters Gordon and Smith vent about the issue:

> Gordon: "That Peterson guy rubs me the wrong way. I think he's gay. He is always inviting kids over to his house to get in the hot tub. I mean, Moore is 18, but he's still a kid to me. But Peterson will text him and say: 'Hey, I'm having a bunch of people over tonight to have some drinks and get in the hot tub.' That shit's just a little weird."
> Smith: "No shit, King said the same thing. Like Peterson's been texting him about his hot tub and drinks and stuff."
> Gordon: "That's like classic pedophile shit, luring over kids with a hot tub with alcohol. But, to tell you the truth, there's just something about his face that bothers me, like he kind of looks like Sloth from *The Goonies*. [laughs] God, I just want to fuck it up. He's got that gay fucking gay lisp too."
> [both laugh]
> Smith: "We should do some *To Catch a Predator* shit, except we should fuck him up. Both Harris and Moore are sick little fucks. Both of them would go over and get in Peterson's hot tub and let him take a pass at 'em. We could video the whole thing and then just fuck him up, with bars of soap and oranges in pillow cases." [more laughing]

This was one of many similar instances of grassroots stigmatization of Peterson's activities.[41] Like Dr. Williams, he was never officially sanctioned for his stigmatized actions, though he did not last at the station more than a month or two after these stories began circulating. While I do not know his perspective on leaving, it is possible that the stigma of his actions generated a collection of cold shoulders and disapproving glares that led to his marginalization and withdrawal from the ranks at Monacan.

Sustained Institutional Inequalities

Culture plays a central role in sustained inequalities. Sociologists have done an excellent job of showing how societal inequalities are rooted in the institutions of social class, gender, race, education, religion, residence, and occupation. All of these are examples of cultural differences that result in sustained inequality at the level of the society. Yet, these same factors that shape life chances do not necessarily shape the experience of inequality in face-to-face encounters. These macro-cultural qualities provide background structures that can influence

[41] While Peterson never publicly identified as homosexual, one other member, FF. Jones, openly identified as such. Jones was seldom the victim of this same kind of aggressive homophobic language. Though a sample size of two presents challenges to drawing generalizations, this suggests that homosexuality alone is not enough for marginalization at Monacan. Rather, lying and coercion are more likely to result in stigma.

inequalities in face-to-face encounters. Rather than macro-cultural identifications that provide totalizing bases of inequality, most hierarchies that emerge in encounters result from meso-level institutional distinctions. These distinctions, like rank or position, provide the objective hierarchy in organizations. Of course, these organizational distinctions vary in terms of how closely they are correlated with macro-cultural categories, like social class, gender, and race.

Meso-level institutional inequalities. While an earlier portion of the chapter discussed how organizations' internal distinctions provide inequality in the moment, these same distinctions are central to sustained inequalities. Indeed, the lived experience of inequality transpires in the face-to-face interactions of brick-and-mortar institutions.

In organizations like Alliance CrossFit, institutionalized hierarchy is a fixture of its culture. Corporeal performances fall into two hierarchies: (1) relative to other CrossFitters and (2) relative to one's own past performances.

The interpersonal ranking of performance in this public forum instills competition in individuals and institutionalizes hierarchy. Every person's performance is documented on the whiteboard. No one wants to be last or to lift the least amount of weight. On one day, like any other, I arrived to a 5:30 class to find familiar faces gathered around the whiteboard looking at the rounds completed, times, and weights of those who worked out earlier in the day. Finding my fellow CrossFitters, I was greeted with comments about relative achievement:

> This one's a monster. Look at how much people are getting through. How did Joe get through seven rounds? That's inhuman. I'm shooting for four. That's enough to not be embarrassing, right?

In this instance, individuals locate themselves on a hierarchy that institutionalizes inequality based on a calculus of effort and corporeal constitution.

A different sense of hierarchy is also institutionalized at CrossFit. All CrossFitters find themselves in hierarchies that institutionalize achievement relative to one's former selves. The

reward and challenge of competing against the self is an inequality that applies to every member. Chad, a 26 year old mathematics graduate student and three year veteran of Alliance CrossFit, tells me about his experience of inequality at Alliance:

> Everybody is impressed by the guy who lifts the most weight. And at a place like this one, there just aren't that many huge dudes. I'm one of the strongest. So, I'm gonna lift more than anybody, so I'm not really comparing myself to them. I compete against myself. Like I know that I used to be able to snatch one hundred kilos and now I can't. It totally eats me up. So, that's what I'm training for, to get back to one hundred kilos.

This is not just Chad's competitive nature. This sort of self-assessing, longitudinal assessment of physical ability is institutionalized by those invested in the institution. Occasionally, management records the scores for specific workouts, sets up a conditioning program over a multi-month period, and then runs the same benchmark workout again. Afterwards, they calculate the relative gains or losses over the period of time. Sometimes this information is even quantified and distributed on social media. This type of institutionalized programming of workouts places people in competition with each other, but also helps people to gauge their development and pits the individual against past versions of the self.[42]

Achieving new milestones makes people feel like they are gaining esteem or respect by improving themselves. Yet, this sort of achievement also draws people into CrossFit culture. One might top the board for the day, but there is no unconditional finish line. Excellence is not absolute, but scaled for one's stage of integration, level of fitness, age, and bodily limitations. The institutionalized notion that one can always improve motivates people to continue returning to CrossFit to compete against others and themselves.

In both the hospital and the fire department, rank provides a relatively fixed system of inequality. Especially in formal settings, rank orders the hierarchy of these social worlds (cf.

[42] Management is careful to use language that frames competition in a communal way. For this particular announcement with a table listing individual performances, the text reads: "In just 43 days of programming, we saw people get an average of 10% stronger, 6% faster, and much better overall! Where do you stand?"

Clawson and Gerstel 2014). In short, across these three contexts, power and responsibility correspond to positions of institutionally sanctioned hierarchy.

Therefore, I argue that institutionalized hierarchies are more durable than grassroots ones. The case of Captain O'Callaghan provides insight on the durability of organizational distinctions. Captain O'Callaghan has about seven years of experience at the station and he has progressed through the ranks all the way up to the rank of captain. FF Carille, a new member to Monacan with about six years of experience at other departments, comments on Captain O'Callaghan's role as a captain:

> I found out the other day that O'Callaghan had never even been in a [structure] fire until the other day. He wasn't in his first fire until he was a captain. I think that's crazy. How can you make decisions about what to do on a fire, if you've never even been in one before? That's no good; it's dangerous. I don't think less of him as a person and I think he's a great officer. Now, I realize that we don't see much fire, but it's a little sad that that's our reality. I mean he's my officer and that's that, but you know, the idea that he's been in one real fire, it's in the back on my head.

FF Carille's comments suggest that the institutional distinction of serving in the position of captain is not in alignment with the yield of grassroots respect that comes from experience. O'Callaghan functions well as an administrator of a crew and fulfills the responsibilities of an officer with competence. Yet, he has not acquired the requisite level of experience to earn grassroots respect commensurate with his position of institutional prestige. This case shows the durability of institutional distinctions and how these tend to outshine grassroots inequalities.

In short, this example portrays the power of meso-level institutional distinctions on inequality in encounters. I now turn to the relationship between organizations and broader patterns of social inequality.

Macro-cultural inequalities. The cultural architecture of inequality in the fire service, in the hospital, and at CrossFit involves multiple and sometimes contradictory institutionalized cultural hierarchies. I find that macro-cultural institutional inequalities latently structure

hierarchy in encounters, but usually this inequality is mediated through meso-level institutions and the actions of the individuals who constitute them. People face inequality in the forms of institutional regulations that preclude involvement and from individuals who act as institutional gatekeepers that formally and informally serve as sentries of existing cultural hierarchies.

There is interplay between macro-cultural inequalities and inequality in brick-and-mortar institutions. Social class structures life chances in modernity, but it does not always correlate with achievement in face-to-face encounters. Even as formal barriers of class-based exclusion are declining, social class is so interwoven into the fabric of contemporary American society that its effects on inequality occur in latent and subtle ways (cf. Streib 2015).

Alliance CrossFit is a context almost entirely composed of highly educated people. CrossFit claims that it is for everyone, but the prohibitive costs maintain a boundary that few working-class persons choose to cross. The cheapest membership is $109 per month for only two visits a week to the gym, which is more than double the cost of many other "big box" gym membership options. On one occasion, a working-class woman, appearing to be in her 30s came in, though not at a time designated for introductory patrons. After taking part in a modified workout that substituted a dumbbell movement for an Olympic weightlifting movement, I happened to watch the trainer hand her a flyer outlining the membership packages offered by the gym. Upon reading the flyer, the interested individual matter-of-factly questioned, "Y'all want $169 a month for unlimited? You ain't even got no machines. Why's it so much?" The additional selling points of "community" and "attention" do not retain many working class clients. Thus, access to disposable income to join a gym like CrossFit and cultural assessments of value for services serve as barriers to involvement from those of lower social classes.

Monacan Volunteer Fire Department has a very different relationship between class and hierarchy. Working-class cultural attributes are celebrated and characteristics viewed as upper-class are marginalized. The chief, assistant chief, and three of the four battalion chiefs all have working-class backgrounds, which reflect the historically working-class roots of Monacan. Due to its proximity to a large state university, students who have been recruited from the university make up a significant subset of the rank-and-file membership.[43] These students are mostly from a middle-class or upper-middle-class background, which leads to a high level of class heterogeneity. In the fire service, organizational rank and assignment give authority. When an engine pulls up an incident, the standard operating procedure dictates that the firefighter riding in seat two assumes command of the incident, whether that person is a "townie" or a student. Class might dispose one to end up on a fireground, but it is not a relevant sorting mechanism in the interactions amongst firefighters on an alarm together.

Around the firehouse, however, culture matters, especially class culture. In an inversion of the social class hierarchy, working-class embodied culture, such as knowledge of how small engines operate or having intimate knowledge of building construction opens doors for promotion. Though Monacan is comparatively diverse in terms of class, gender, and racial composition for a fire station, the collectively upheld working-class values of the fire service still dominate the space and marginalize those who are highly educated, non-white, and who do not embody a traditional form of masculinity. The volunteer fire service in the American South remains a stronghold of working-class, white masculinity.

[43] Many of these students join to pursue Emergency Medical Technician training in hopes of gaining real-world experience providing patient care. With hundreds of hours of training required to become a firefighter and EMT, in addition to the time commitment required in attending duty shifts, many of these students end up floundering in pre-med courses.

Social class does not provide an official barrier to inclusion or advancement in any of these institutions, yet, class inequality is upheld across all institutions. The organizational distinctions and grassroots cultures of brick-and-mortar institutions often become latent agents for upholding macro-level social inequalities. Similarly, no formal regulations ban or limit involvement or advancement based on gender or race. Yet, CrossFit reifies gender differences, creating institutional hierarchies of "separate but equal" categories of gendered achievement. Racial inequality is also not institutionally upheld; rather, as I demonstrated earlier in the chapter, micro-aggressions and outright exclusionary systems of racialized inequality are upheld through grassroots practices.

Alliance, Monacan, and Southern are physical institutions that provide the context for encounters that yield inequality. Macro-cultural inequalities are only realized through the intersection of institutional distinctions and grassroots practices. With this in mind, I conclude the chapter with a discussion of how inequalities can be thought of as nested and how they acquire power when macro-, meso-, and grassroots inequalities intersect.

Plural and Nested Inequalities

This research demonstrates how situational and sustained inequalities in face-to-face encounters are the product of institutional cultural infrastructures and grassroots cultural hierarchies. I argue that institutional culture provides durable distinctions that uphold enduring structures of inequality, but accounting for esteem and respect helps us to understand how inequality is always a dialogue between institutional and grassroots cultures.

In stable organizations, institutional distinctions and grassroots esteem or respect are aligned, which creates powerful, lasting structures of inequality. Furthermore, when macro-cultural, meso-institutional, and grassroots hierarchies overlap, a system of inequality emerges.

Yet, this system of inequality is weak when institutional distinctions do not correspond with the prestige residing in the minds of those populating a social world. This disjuncture is likely to be found in moments lacking formal structure, in periods of institutional flux, and in weak institutions. These circumstances allow for grassroots inequalities to surface as powerful foundations of inequality.

This chapter highlights the role of culture in inequality among small-group encounters. Existing sociological accounts of stratification systems do not give access to the inequalities that transpire in the action of face-to-face interaction. I argue that these findings suggest we should be mindful to question the ways that macro-inequalities do not paint a full picture of inequality. Operating under the presumption of Bourdieusian practice theory (Bourdieu 1984, 1990) that resources, cultural or otherwise, are being monopolized by those in power to perpetuate boundaries that maintain a stratified social system does not allow sociologists to fully capture the complementary and sometimes resistive qualities of grassroots inequalities in encounters. The neo-Marxian, Bourdieusian model is too macro-focused and too rigid. We need to continue moving beyond a "uni-dimensional" hierarchy to one that is "multi-dimensional" (Lenski 1954). The lived experience of inequality and the inequalities that emerge in face-to-face encounters have grassroots foundations to which sociologists must attend (cf. Collins 2000).

This chapter also gives purchase on how a cultural lens can be employed to translate difference into hierarchy. Shared cultural meanings that are rooted in group conventions provide bases for cultural hierarchy. In turn, inequality requires a cultural standard to impose values on differences to yield hierarchy. Whether at the societal or organizational level, institutional distinctions provide the cultural bases for hierarchy. And, consequently, these institutional

distinctions find backing or resistance from grassroots cultural hierarchies. Together, these constitute cultural architectures of inequalities.

In this chapter, I have analyzed encounters as arenas of cultural inequality. This focus on hierarchy must also be paired with an understanding of the cultural foundations of connection and community reviewed in chapter three. In chapter six, I focus on how certain institutional conditions can lead to the emergence of situational and sustained inequalities.

Chapter 6. The Interactional Ecology of Inequality

A sociology of encounters cannot be understood only in terms of grassroots and institutional cultures. I argue that inequality can be examined in terms of the interactional ecologies of encounters. I show how qualities of the encounter and its corresponding modes of interaction shape situational and sustained inequalities. Watershed moments and institutional inefficaciousness are qualities of encounters that lead to the emergence of situational inequality. When these two qualities occur concurrently, the outcome is magnified. Interactional ecologies also produce sustained inequalities in three ways. First, sustained inequalities can result from chains of inequality inducing encounters that culminate in respect or stigma. Second, individualistic pursuits of advancement activate grassroots culture or institutional culture to produce sustained inequalities. Third, exclusionary rituals are a form of distancing and othering that highlights symbolic distance or boundaries from another individual or group.

Introduction

Firefighters are finishing up their evening training when the station receives an alarm for a "reduced structure fire," meaning there are signs of a fire but no confirmed flames. Both Engines 1 and 2 respond, along with a chief officer responding from home and an engine from the adjacent city. All of the firefighters rush downstairs to the engine bays to get geared up. Engine 1, the one in which I am riding, pulls out of the station first.

Due to staffing issues, FF Musso, a firefighter without much leadership experience, is riding seat two—the "officer" position and the riding assignment with the most responsibility. The firefighter riding in "the seat" must handle radio communication, navigate to the call, take initial command of the incident, give assignments to the other incoming apparatus, and direct those on her/his engine. It is a challenging role, even for someone with a lot of experience. For Musso, it proves to be a tough call.

Getting close to the house, the engine is making its way through a dark, heavily wooded, older suburban neighborhood. Approaching a non-perpendicular intersection on the winding streets, the driver, FF Gordon, asks Musso, the officer and navigator, "Is it a left or a right here? Incompetently fumbling with the navigational computer that should route directions and display

an interactive map, Musso responds, “Uh, go left. That’s the way the quick directions are telling us to go.” The engine turns left and meanders its way through the winding streets of the neighborhood. Eventually, the progress is impeded by another unconventional intersection. Musso announces, “Go left.” However, the turn is approximately a 120 degree turn with steeply banked drainage ditches on either side of the roadway. To complete the turn, the engine has to back up and pull forward three times. While the driver executes this multi-point turn, Engine 2 approaches from the other direction, though it is forced to stop as our engine is blocking the roadway. With a tone of frustration, Gordon lectures Musso:

> Fuck, Musso! To be fair, Justin [officer of the other engine] caught it on the map. You're not a dumbass for not catching that on the map, but in the future you need to look out for something like that. We should have come from the other direction and not have to make a fucking eighty-point turn. This would have been so much easier if you just would pull up the big map to look how to get there.

Eventually exiting the difficult turn, both engines pull towards a cul-de-sac with a large garden and trees in the middle. Again, Gordon asks Musso for direction: “Which one is it?” [pause] “The one straight ahead or to the right?” Musso begins stammering, frantically operating the touchpad on the aging Toughbook laptop. In the momentary break, with the truck idling in front of two driveways, Gordon turns around in his seat to look in the rear of the cab. Everyone is in full personal protective equipment, with SCBA (self-contained breathing apparatus), radios, and flashlights. Though everyone is ready to fulfill their designated roles, the engine is idling in a cul-de-sac with another engine waiting in line behind it. Gordon locks eyes with FF Schutz who is riding backward in seat three, shakes his head in disbelief, and rolls his eyes.[44]

After what seems to me like an eternity, Musso blurts out, frantically, “I’m not sure.” Gordon yells, “Fuck, Musso!” Breaking from his assigned role as engine operator, Gordon informally takes command: “Schutz, jump out and look at that mailbox to see which one it is.

[44] This is an instance of Gordon and Schutz experiencing a moment of situational belonging as they bond over the shared hardship of the encounter.

God fucking damn it!" Disengaging his SCBA from the in-seat mount, Schutz jumps out of the engine and moves a package in front of the numbers on the closest mailbox, allowing him to identify the appropriate residence. He points at the driveway adjacent to the engine. By this time, the third engine and the duty chief have arrived on scene and are stuck in a line behind Engine 1. What could have been a timely response has been botched.

Missteps like this one are "watershed moments"—encounters characterized by focused attention and organizational significance. These tend to have significant consequence for inequality. In a situation like this, an incipient residential structure fire is estimated to double in size every thirty seconds to two minutes. A delayed response could be the difference between a rescue of a victim and the recovery of a scorched corpse. Furthermore, en route to a call, it is standard practice to prepare for the worst-case scenario. With this in mind, it is easy to see how small missteps have great consequences for hierarchy.

Luckily for everyone, this "reduced structure fire" turns out to be nothing more than a burning smell resultant from the activation of the electrical emergency heating element in the heating, ventilating, and air conditioning system. Though it was well within his rights as the rider of "the seat," Musso ends up not assuming command of the incident and instead defers to the experience of the assistant chief already on scene. As a new member at the time of this incident, I was unable to enter the structure and I did not gain access to the interactions inside.[45] Near the end of the incident, I observed a private conversation between Musso, Gordon, and the assistant chief. At a minimum, there was discussion and possibly even reprimand for the mismanaged response. Once everyone loaded back onto the engine, the usual light-hearted banter that comes

[45] One must be state certified and departmentally "released" to enter an IDLH (Immediately Dangerous to Life or Health) environment. As an uncertified and probationary member, I was marooned outside to assist the driver and perform external operations as needed.

from the charge of excitement surrounding a fire call was absent. It was a silent ride back to the station. Musso likely experienced shame and the faces of everyone showed signs of frustration.

In this encounter, there are significant consequences for situational inequality. Though the institutional role of officer is upheld during this encounter, Musso's peers overwhelming assess him scornfully. Musso's inability to successfully navigate the engine company to the incident using the computer system marks him as an ineffective officer. The certifications that officially qualify him to sit in the officer's seat and to possess that institutional distinction do not actually align with his embodied abilities. Even in his failure, Musso retains the state's acknowledgement of his skillset and organizational authority in the moment. Indeed, Musso was not even required to move out of "the seat" for the ride back to the station. From the standpoint of institutional distinctions, Gordon's undercutting of Musso's authority also did not officially rob him of this institutional assignment. Thus, the inequality that is produced in this encounter is grassroots scorn. In the moment, Musso has disappointed, angered, or frustrated his peers and they think less of him now. In this case, Musso's status is threatened by the grassroots imposition of scorn in the encounter.

Watershed moments, such as this one, can also have enduring consequences for sustained inequality. From an organizational standpoint, Musso does not lose any institutional distinctions, such as certifications, but this does not mean that the event is without enduring consequences. A few weeks later, when I was inquiring about seating assignments, Gordon jokes: "Well, we can run two engines tonight, but that's presuming that you count So-So [demeaning nickname for Musso] as a released firefighter." The attribution of this nickname reflects his low status in the grassroots hierarchy. The comment, in turn, suggests that his abilities as firefighter might be deficient relative to the position's minimal qualifications. While firefighters typically share a

jocular rapport, this joke covers up serious reservations about his stock of embodied cultural capital. Thus, Musso acquires the durable stigma of being a failure; he does not receive any formal sanction and does not lose credentials, but he does lose grassroots respect, making him the last choice to ride "the seat" in the future.

The actions of the engine operator, Gordon, can also be interpreted as an individualistic pursuit of advancement. Gordon is officially of commensurate standing with Musso, though he has significantly more experience. In this instance, Gordon undercuts Musso's institutional authority as the "seat two" officer by informally barking orders. While Gordon might be trying to help Musso or increase efficiency for the engine company as a whole, this may also be interpreted as a grassroots attempt to undercut an institutionalized hierarchy of authority. Gordon's actions on the way to the fire call and comments at the fire house are individualistic attempts to denigrate Musso and possibly gain esteem.

One small encounter such as this can become a watershed moment that has consequences within the encounter and for the future. The consequence for Musso was intense scorn in the moment, a grassroots form of situational inequality, which may develop into stigma, a sustained form of grassroots inequality, over time. If the fire had involved significant property damage, then a stronger stigma would have likely been attached to Musso for his performance. If there were a fatality, this grassroots stigma might have even deepened into formal negligence—a form of institutionalized stigma. In that case, he could be implicated by the criminal justice system as being negligent in his duties. This scene thus illustrates how qualities of an encounter can have intense or enduring consequences for inequality. After all, it is in encounters that the action of social life transpires.

In this chapter, I outline the interactional ecology of inequality. I discuss how qualities of the encounter and its corresponding modes of interaction shape hierarchy. As an example, this opening scene of a watershed moment prompts us to think about how interactional ecologies shape the emergence of inequality in encounters. After a description of ecologies of inequality in my three research sites, I will show how watershed moments and institutional inefficaciousness are two interactional properties that yield situational inequality. Watershed moments are encounters characterized by focused attention and of significant consequence for hierarchy. Meanwhile, moments of institutional inefficaciousness allow for situational inequality to develop. In these sort of relatively unstructured encounters, individualistic pursuits tend to emerge that lead to hierarchy in the encounter.

Later in the chapter, I argue that sustained inequality can emerge from interactional ecologies of encounters in three ways. First, I argue that chains of encounters that produce momentary inequalities result in sustained inequality over time. Second, I show how sustained inequalities develop around grassroots or institutional cultures in the absence of institutional mitigation. Third, exclusionary rituals facilitate distancing and othering that emphasizes intergroup inequality or social distance from an individual.

This chapter parallels chapter four's differentiation between institutional rituals and grassroots practices to show how inequalities develop out of qualities of context and interaction. Differentiating between institutional rituals and grassroots practices shows how institutional rituals uphold a system of inequality, whereas grassroots practices can provide an ancillary or oppositional hierarchy.

Three Interactional Ecologies of Inequality

The introductory vignette to this chapter highlights a watershed moment that is consequential for one firefighter on the way to an incident. Interestingly, the interactional ecology of the fire service includes many of these watershed moments. It is for this reason that the unpredictable fireground is the scene of so many inequalities. These encounters are tenuous affairs. One call might involve a floor that is ready to collapse, while the next might involve a patient or family member with a violent psychotic issue. These encounters are unpredictable and there is a sense of madness to them. The non-routine and unpredictable character of these interactions sets the stage for successes and failures that are quite consequential for inequality in the moment and can set the stage for enduring inequality. At the grassroots level, this may yield stigma or respect. Institutionally, this may lead to promotion, stagnation, or even demotion. In chapter four I highlighted the qualities of interactions and contexts that generate connection in the firehouse, but the large quantity of relatively unstructured downtime that transpires in this context also creates potential for grassroots hierarchies to emerge. When institutional activities cease, individualistic pursuits tend to emerge and grassroots exclusionary efforts develop. These grassroots exclusionary practices maintain inequality amongst the rank-and-file, but these are additionally paired with institutional rituals that uphold sustained inequalities. For example, the fire service tends to incorporate highly formalized rituals of promotion in front of the entire brigade that result in enduring inequalities. Yet, not all highly institutionalized settings have the same interactional ecology of inequality.

The interactional ecology of medicine, for example, has greater institutional efficaciousness than the social world of firefighters. Those in the world of medicine similarly trade in life or death, but their environments are much more orderly, regulated, and controlled.

These are institutional spaces with strong cultural hierarchies and orderly happenings. While these contexts are designed to routinize the unpredictability of life or death situations, there are still watershed moments that produce inequality. In the realm of medicine, these are instances where physicians make astute observations or spur of the moment judgment calls deserving of esteem or respect in a grassroots hierarchy of peers. Medicine also differs significantly from the fire service in that achievement and failure are individualized. Though it takes a network of healthcare providers working within a framework of institutional regulations to provide care, the outcome of a patient is attributed to the care of a singular physician. In addition, encounters in the hospital often fail to mitigate medical students' self-interested attempts to gain esteem through displays of institutional culture. These sorts of individualistic pursuits exacerbate inequality if not tempered by a strong collectivist culture.

Lastly, Alliance CrossFit has an interactional ecology that involves a nuanced relationship with inequality. The interactional ecology of CrossFit upholds an inter-class hierarchy, that is, a hierarchy among CrossFit classes. Meanwhile, it mitigates individualistic pursuits of inequality while still upholding the objective corporeal hierarchies within each specific class. Thinking about the gym as a whole, Alliance's space segregates CrossFitters by class into two areas of the gym: the main floor and downstairs. These regions are segregated by elevation and by a dividing wall. Each space has its own music soundtrack playing and is led by its own trainers. The regular CrossFit class—the core of the CrossFit curriculum—transpires in the large communal space, while other classes are segregated to the downstairs region. This downstairs region is where the Essentials, introductory, and weightlifting classes all occur. The scheduling is such that there are no more than two classes occurring concurrently, but this arrangement also leads to a segregated space conducive to inter-group hierarchy. Meanwhile, the

social environment within any specific class upholds an egalitarian use of physical space. Every CrossFit class is structured around a set routine: all those who take a class complete the same structured workout though scaled to their ability; all actions use the same props and transpire in one of the gym's two spaces; and no workout is complete until every single person has finished. The interactional ecology of any particular class is inherently egalitarian and negates inequality.

Interactional Ecology of Situational Inequalities

Most situational inequality is a result of the qualities of encounters and the modes of action that transpire within them. I will examine how watershed moments and institutional inefficaciousness are qualities of encounters that lead to situational inequality. Watershed moments are encounters that command focused attention and hold significant consequences for hierarchy in the moment. These outcomes matter because culture charges these events with meaning that may lead to polarizing or meaningful outcomes. The institutional inefficaciousness of encounters is another quality that leads to situational inequality. In specific encounters, weak institutional influence often leads to the development of situational inequality. In other words, those interactions that are relatively unstructured or unregulated allow for self-serving, individualistic pursuits to emerge. These self-serving ambitions and goals are a form of grassroots inequality. In sum, both watershed moments and moments of institutional inefficaciousness can lead to inequalities in encounters. These have a compounding effect when both qualities are present in an encounter.

Watershed Moments

Watershed moments are encounters of focused attention and organizational significance. These incidents provide pause from routine interactions and are opportunities for focused attention on consequential action. Moments of this variety tend to have polarizing outcomes for

situational and sustained inequality. In other words, watershed moments tend to produce grassroots esteem or scorn in the moment, but may graduate into enduring respect or stigma. These grassroots hierarchies tend to only result in situational inequality, though enduring inequality in the form of institutional promotion or reprimand might emerge from a specific encounter.

One of the informal rituals amongst firefighters is the climbing of the one hundred foot aerial ladder at a seventy percent grade (its steepest angle). This is celebrated as a sorting mechanism of character for new members. Firefighters usually climb this with only a ladder belt that allows them to secure themselves once inside the bucket. This means that a loss of grip could result in a life terminating tumble. On my very first weekend in the field, I am lined up at the base of the ladder with two other probationary members. After a set of instructions, Probationary Firefighter Lewis stands at the base of the aerial ladder, takes two steps up, turns around, and seeks clarification, "All the way?" FF Carter, one of the released firefighters, comments sarcastically, "No, just go up one more rung and wave to the guys at the top. Come on man, shit or get off the pot." This witty response highlights how inequality can develop out of moments of great scrutiny. In this case, the new firefighter is sitting at the base of the ladder with all attention focused on him; he can either climb the aerial and meet the expectations of the group or stay on the ground and accrue scorn in the moment. In the day-to-day encounters of the fire service, there are many "shit or get off the pot" moments. While this is training exercise, it sets the stage for future assessments of a probationary member. Meanwhile, encounters on actual calls like the one in the opening vignette of this chapter are much more likely to yield esteem or scorn that are consequential for inequality.

The stakes are much lower in a context like Alliance CrossFit. Achieving one's first handstand push-up or demonstrating competence at double-under jump roping is not as consequential as battling a residential structure fire, but it does have significant consequences for hierarchy in this social context. Much like in the fire service, the development of esteem or scorn emerges from these watershed moments. For instance, one of the most difficult movements in CrossFit is "the muscle-up." Requiring strength and coordination, the muscle-up is essentially a pull-up into a dip on a set of rings. Much time is devoted to "skill work" on muscle-ups at CrossFit. These particular classes become an opportunity to get one-on-one feedback on the technique of transitioning from a pull-up into a dip position. Those who have not yet mastered the technique or lack the strength to complete the movement spend time honing technique and completing sets of dips and pull-ups for strength training. At the beginning of these sorts of training exercises, it is a convention for everyone to line up around the sets of rings and take turns attempting to complete the movement. In one of my first classes, I volunteered to go first. Just recently graduated from the Essentials classes, I was naïve to the difficultly of the movement and could not even get from the hanging to the dip position on the rings. With everyone watching, my attempt was a total failure. Several of those present even made remarks including, "You're still new. You'll get there."

The trainer invited one of the more experienced CrossFitters to demonstrate: "Patrick, you want to show 'em a muscle-up?" Patrick, who was actually training to become a CrossFit instructor himself, grasps the rings and completes five muscle-ups in rapid succession. The trainer thanks him. Several of the faces in the group display signs of admiration. In this situation, my beginner's performance reaps scorn, while Patrick's earns esteem. Even in a supportive, collectivist culture like that of Alliance's, there is an objective hierarchy. One falls into two

categories; you either "have muscle-ups" or you are "still working on muscle-ups." This sort of watershed moment focuses attention on a culturally significant task and yields an outcome of esteem or scorn that shapes the face of inequality in the moment.

Watershed moments can occur on the floor of the CrossFit box, on the fireground, and in the process of providing patient care in the hospital. Yet, these moments lead to situational inequalities based on the cultural conventions of the organization. It should not be overlooked, however, that situational inequalities also result from a lack of institutional regulation in interactions.

Institutional Inefficaciousness

The institutional inefficaciousness of encounters additionally leads to situational inequality. In face-to-face encounters, weak institutional influence tends to generate the emergence of situational inequality by way of grassroots actions. Indeed, self-serving, degrading, or individualistic pursuits tend to emerge in interactions that are relatively unstructured or unregulated. Considering the level of institutional influence within a given interaction as a variable that shapes behavior helps explicate the conditions that lead to situational inequality. Amongst those who constitute high-commitment organizations like Alliance, Monacan, and Southern, individualistic pursuits tend to emerge in unstructured or unregulated interactions. Thus, I argue that institutional inefficaciousness leads to the emergence of situational inequality.

At Southern, I observed how physicians behaved differently dependent upon their physical context, that is, whether they were in the hospital or outside of it. Interactions within the hospital were heavily regulated. There was a formal hierarchy bound to culture that was upheld almost absolutely. Outside of the hospital, at happy hours, at medical school social events, and

other encounters where the institutional influence was limited, grassroots inequality would emerge in routine interactions.

In the final year of medical school, students select a specialization and interview at various programs around the country. This is a time-consuming affair that culminates in both the schools and candidates ranking each other. A centralized system matches schools and candidates based on their standardized Boards scores and interview evaluations. Some people inevitably do not match because they aim for schools or specializations that are not commensurate with their performances. Discussion of matches and those who did not match varied based on the level of institutional structure.

In the institutional space of the hospital, it is taboo to discuss the details on those who did not match into a program, whereas gossiping about matches in a social setting is acceptable. In the week following matches, the topic was not discussed while providing patient care. Meanwhile, it was discussed in a formal and factual manner during downtime in the hospital. At "Match Day," outside the tempering institutional constraints, grassroots opinions were voiced. At Southern, "Match Day" is a production that involves T-shirts, designed with an NFL Draft Day theme, and includes a formal ceremony where matches are officially revealed, concluded with catered party in a local pub. At the bar, several of the soon-to-be M.D.s discussed how Williams, the alcoholic medical student discussed in chapter five, did not match into a residency program:

> Ezekian: What do you guys think about Williams not matching?
> Bryant: Well, if anyone wasn't going to match, I mean, I figured that it would be him.
> Ezekian: I know, right? Do you think they picked up somehow that he's a drunk?
> Allen: I don't know. But, he didn't match in Peds. Like, that's not dermatology.
> Bryant: I feel for the guy. That's like the worst thing that could happen.

This type of conversation is unlikely to transpire in an institutional context like the hospital. This grassroots stigmatization of Williams is a form of inequality that would only emerge in interactions with weak institutional regulation.

Similar encounters occur in the fire service, with similar outcomes. Due to the vast amount of time spent together over shifts that last up to 48 hours, there is significant downtime in the firehouse that provides moments of sovereignty from institutional structure. In these gaps, inequality tends to emerge around the culture that is significant for the group.

In these moments, firefighters tend to wield material and embodied culture to outshine others. Materially, firefighters display markers of experience: blood on turnout pants, a sooty helmet, smoke-laced turnout gear, or tales of firefighting prowess. Each item aims to demonstrate a high position in the cultural hierarchy; they are status claims. One Rookie Firefighter who was absorbed in the materiality of firefighting culture, for example, commented to a group of other newer members about an officer's helmet: "Have you all seen Green's helmet? That thing has seen like twenty-five fires. You almost can't even tell that it's yellow anymore." In fact, many firefighters choose not to wash gear laced with blood, carcinogens, or particles of incomplete combustion due to the authentic look it lends their trappings. This practice is not only medically hazardous, but it also makes one's gear flammable. These are the taxes paid on status displays to succeed in encounters when burning buildings are not available to demonstrate one's character. On the fireground, relative success comes through institutionally valued actions. In the firehouse, these residues of culturally valued action provide another means to best others.

Whether it is due to weak institutional regulations or due to watershed moments where success or failure hinges on one's action, situational inequality emerges in large part from the contextual and interactional properties of encounters. Independent of the personality types of those involved in face-to-face interaction, the qualities of encounters and corresponding modes

of interaction shape situational inequalities. I now expand on these insights to show how sustained forms of inequality also emerge from the interactional ecology of encounters.

Interactional Ecology of Sustained Inequalities

I argue that sustained inequality develops partly due to interactional ecology in three ways. First, I argue that the qualities of encounters that generate inequality often overlap and magnify inequality in the moment. Second, in the absence of institutional bulwarks, sustained inequalities emerge around grassroots or institutional cultures. Finally, exclusionary rituals are a form of othering that highlights symbolic distance or boundaries from another individual or group.

Chains of Inequalities

Expanding on the discussion from the first half of this chapter, I find that chains of encounters yielding situational inequality can develop into sustained inequalities (cf. Collins 2004a). I will expand on the case of Musso that I introduced earlier, for Musso did not just face that one scorn-inducing encounter, but rather forged enduring stigma through a chain of encounters. In addition to his failure in seat two, he repeatedly fell short of expectations on routine tasks, such as failing to tie a Clove Hitch knot on an extension ladder and lacking the knowhow to assemble stabilization supports on a car accident. In addition, he earned the reputation of being gullible and unable to interpret firefighter humor. For example, FF Davidson frequently recounts the tale of an innocuous lie that he told to Musso during training:

> The worst is Jesse Musso. One time he was asking me about fire trucks and I told him that tiller drivers [rear drivers of a tractor-drawn aerial, tiller ladder, or hook-and-ladder truck] get free taxi rides wherever they want because they get so used to driving around and steering in the wrong direction. And I swear to God, he believed me.

In the common response to a good story, Davidson elicited a wall of booming belly-laughs from the crew. For Musso, stigma accrues from chains of failure in watershed moments: failing to

navigate on the way to a fire call, failure to deploy embodied knowledge in training, and failure to participate as an insider in the jocular rapport of the firehouse. This pattern of scorn-generating encounters graduates to stigma that places him near the bottom of the social hierarchy of Monacan.

Contrastingly, at Alliance CrossFit, one member, Danny, stands out as having garnered respect over time for his attendance and whole-hearted immersion in the social world of Alliance CrossFit. I discuss Danny as the centerpiece of the introduction to chapter five. Ostensibly joining to get in shape for his wedding, Danny attended classes up to five days a week and took part in the Paleo Challenge—a five week program where participants eat a Paleolithic diet and complete benchmark workouts to track progress on fundamental movements.[46] While I have only seen him finish a WOD first on one occasion, it is not his exceptional physical prowess that earns respect. Rather, it is his daily dedication to the lifestyle of CrossFit. As the General Manager told me before a workout, knowing that we have a common external affiliation, "Dan's been in here like every day, trying to get in shape for his wedding or whatever. It's awesome." Across a chain of encounters, he earns respect from his dedication to an intense workout regimen, adoption of a CrossFit lifestyle, and participation in their supplemental programs. Now, we turn our attention to other interactional mechanisms for the production of sustained inequalities.

Individualistic Pursuits

In arguing that sustained inequalities emerge around grassroots or institutional cultures when institutional inhibitions are absent or weak, I expand upon my previous discussion of how institutional inefficaciousness is a quality of encounters that leads to situational inequality in the

[46] A Paleolithic diet (or Paleo diet or Caveman diet) is a diet designed around the food humans' ancient ancestors were thought to have eaten, such as meat, nuts, and berries. It excludes foods that these people were thought not to have had access, like dairy, grains, legumes, and high-calorie processed foods. Proponents claim that modern humans have not adjusted to metabolize these foods.

moment. In the absence of institutional regulations or routinized grassroots practices to inhibit them, chains of individualistic pursuits tend to develop across encounters and create sustained inequalities.

The form of these individualistic pursuits further varies in regards to the institutional structures that shape encounters. In contexts where encounters are highly structured by their housing institutions, it is more likely for individualistic pursuits to develop in relation to the valued institutional culture. Meanwhile, individualistic pursuits that develop relatively outside the reign of focused institutional influence are more likely to be rooted in grassroots culture.

In the institutional space of the hospital, inequality develops amongst the physicians and medical students in correspondence with the institutionalized values of the organization. Dr. Gupta speaks about the individualistic pursuits of "Gunners" and how they aim to best others within the institutionalized setting of the hospital:

> The term we use for students who show off to the attending or whatever, making other med students look bad, they're called Gunners. Gunners are people who are super competitive and who are trying to make themselves look so high and get good recommendation letters and stuff. But… most people like the people who are really smart, but are humble about it, and are not trying to show up other people, and are easy to work with. Some of these [Gunners] you can be hanging out with them outside of the hospital and they will be completely normal and easy to get along with, but as soon as you put them in the environment where they have the ability to show up other people, they kind of act more pretentious around residents and attendings, and answer a lot of questions, and for no reason display that they are more knowledgeable than other people. It brings it out. And so, they can act completely different outside of the hospital than they do inside the hospital.

In this focused institutional setting, in classes, and on rotations, "Gunners" aim to best their peers by deploying culture that holds value within the organization. In encounters that transpire within a strong institutional order, individualistic pursuits develop within institutional channels.

On the other hand, encounters that transpire relatively independent of strong institutional structures tend to emerge around the grassroots conventions of those constituting the encounter. While people never fully escape the influence of the macro-structural social institutions that shape life chances, the influence of meso-level institutions, especially the policies and

regulations of brick-and-mortar institutions, has limits. In the relative absence of this meso-institutional influence, it is more likely for individualistic pursuits to develop around grassroots hierarchy. As noted, in the fire service, the fireground is an encounter where institutional influence is strong; there is a clear division of labor and chain of command tasking groups to perform institutional tasks. Yet, back at the firehouse, this same institutionalized inequality gives way to a much more informal hierarchy. Though they still are undoubtedly influenced by the culture of the organization, the unstructured exchanges on the catwalk at night have much less institutional order than those on the fireground.

On the catwalk, the hierarchy is organically developed from one's interests, politics, and ability to take part in crass banter. Inequalities thus emerge around a grassroots hierarchy that results in respect and stigma. The informal and unstructured atmosphere of the catwalk provides an encounter where immature men may develop a social hierarchy rooted in story telling ability, humor, and flatulence. To offer an example of an idiosyncratic individualistic pursuit, FF Thorton is revered as "An Olympian at Ripping Ass." On one summer evening around 11:00 p.m., just like so many other nights, a collective of five firefighters lounge in a semi-circle of lawn chairs and make-shift seats from the catwalk railings, drinking sodas and smoking cigars. Waving his hands frantically in the air, Thorton proclaims, "These bugs are fucking driving me nuts." In the constrained space of the catwalk, Thorton must step over the legs of FF Smith, a frequent catwalker, to escape the insects. While straddling Smith's chair, he lets out a fart about two feet from the face of Smith. Smith screams, "Come on man," and he covers his nose and mouth with his shirt. Thorton laughs uncontrollably, along with everyone on the catwalk. After thirty seconds of laughter, FF Gordon is able to catch his breath enough to proclaim: "That. Was. Amaaaaaaazing. You're my new hero." Others with similar values look up to Thorton for this

ability. Totally independent of his performance on the fireground, Thorton's grassroots respect is secured in this interactional niche. When there are no fires to extinguish, he inflates his status with these gaseous displays. On the fireground, these sorts of individualistic efforts to achieve would not hold merit. In this catwalk encounter that is relatively lacking in formal institutional structure, Thorton is a "hero" who gains esteem by deploying grassroots culture that has value amongst those in the encounter.

In contexts that lack a stable institutional framework, individualistic practices tend to emerge. Encounters constituted by those with common cultural affiliations and weak institutional structure tend to yield individualistic practices along grassroots hierarchies, such as firefighters on the catwalk who respect a farter. Alternatively, encounters that occur in environments with strong institutional structure tend to produce individualistic pursuits within the structure of the institution, such as medical students trying to impress attending physicians with their specialized medical knowledge. Over time, these individualistic pursuits tend to yield enduring stigma or respect that upholds sustained hierarchy over time and across encounters.

Rituals of Exclusion

The final way I find that hierarchy emerges from interactional ecology is through exclusionary rituals. These instances of othering allow a group to distance its in-group from another individual or collective that is not in keeping with its values. In turn, these efforts to manufacture inequality create symbolic boundaries or distance between an in-group and an out-group. These instances of symbolic exclusion range from slights or micro-aggressions, on the one hand, to elaborate rituals on the other.

The opening vignette offers an example of an organizational representative othering someone who does not match up to institutional conventions. Firefighter Gordon symbolically

excludes Musso from the brotherhood of firefighters: "We can run two engines tonight, but that's presuming that you count So-So [demeaning nickname for Musso] as a released firefighter." This is an example of an organizational representative othering someone who is failing or at least not succeeding by the standards of the institution. Another example of symbolic exclusion is Dr. Gupta's disparaging opinion about "Gunners" from earlier in this chapter:

> Gunners are people who are super competitive and who are trying to make themselves look so high and get good recommendation letters and stuff. But… most people like the people who are really smart, but are humble about it, and are not trying to show up other people, and are easy to work with

Gupta offers a perspective that manufactures distance between those engaging in these individualistic pursuits and those like him. Much like the example from the firehouse, Gupta creates a symbolic boundary between the in-group and the out-group. In both cases, these sort of micro-aggressions or micro-rituals of exclusion can eventually result in meaningful inequalities that are manufactured out of the action of encounters.

Though the instances reviewed above reflect minor slights of others, these rituals of exclusion can become elaborate formal or informal productions. Such exclusion is not found in CrossFit, which is a for-profit organization in the business of inclusion. In the world of medicine, formal reprimand may occur behind closed doors. Meanwhile at Monacan, it is very uncommon that someone is formally removed from the organization, as a volunteer department depends on the labor of volunteers. In this context, exclusionary rituals happen informally. The ritualistic exclusion of FF Schutz provides insight into an instance of informal exclusion.

At age 33, FF Schutz has become a fixture of the fire station. After ten years as a volunteer firefighter, he has acquired more significant firefighting experience than most of Monacan's membership. This stockpile of cultural capital, a valued source of status, is offset by a lack of meaningful associations. Schutz is vilified as a "squirrelly" [a pejorative label for someone who steals emergency responses from others] and a self-serving individual. Schutz also

brags about his accomplishments to anyone who will listen. To become entrapped in a conversation with him is known as "getting Schutzed."

Eventually, Schutz is hired by a local department, necessitating his resignation from Monacan. Yet, two days after his resignation date, he returns "to Schutz all over the station," as FF Miller describes it. After a probationary member arrives and announces that Schutz is outside in his new career uniform, Miller comments: "It's an April Fool's joke. Schutz isn't here." A battalion chief, who is taking care of business, interjects: "Tell him, he's a career man now. He needs to get off the property. He's not allowed around here anymore." No one knows if the chief is serious in his claim or not. Nevertheless, Schutz enters the building to talk to the crew on duty. No one honors his presence by getting off the couches or by even turning down the volume of an episode of *COPS* blaring on the TV. Schutz states that the formal reason for his visit is to drop off a watermelon, but this rationalization seems to be merely an angle that allows him "to Schutz" about his first two days of recruit school.

Late that evening, after training has finished, everyone is standing around the kitchen and Miller comments: "It makes me want to smash this fucking melon like it was his face." Johnson's face lights up and he suggests: "Let's smash Schutz's watermelon and send him a video of it. That'll keep him from coming around." FF Miller comments: "That's a great idea, but I have a better one. Y'all go down by the engines and film this and we can send it to Schutz." He picks up the watermelon and scurries off to the window of the upstairs training room. I follow several of the firefighters out onto the area just outside of where the engines park. Captain Bundy and FF Miller lean out of the windows overlooking the concrete curtain in front of the station. Johnson films while two of us look on. FF Miller pronounces: "Chris Schutz, you are hereby voted out of Monacan." From the second story window, he throws the watermelon upward into

the air, so that it makes a large arc; it quickly falls and splatters all over the concrete in front of the station. Johnson, still videoing, approaches the watermelon slowly, panning the camera left to right, ensuring that he captures all the pieces of the watermelon. As he does this, he adds: "Schutz, you motherfucker, this is what we think of you." Everyone laughs and the recording is concluded.

The act of exploding the watermelon is an exclusionary ritual that distances Schutz from the rest of the department. This is a moment of bonding through exclusion. Certainly, this informal ritual would bring informal sanctions from the chiefs, even if they agreed with the sentiment of the act. Yet, the ritual allows the firefighters to symbolically remove a "bad apple" from their ranks and affirm the core values of the collective.

The process of symbolic exclusion provides an interactional mechanism for an individual or a collective to manufacture distance between the in-group and another individual or collective. Whether it is a chain of micro-ritual exclusions or one symbolically charged ceremony, such as the bursting of the watermelon, the outcome is to create and uphold sustained inequality between an in-group and the marginalized.

Arenas of Inequality

Encounters can be thought of as arenas of inequality. In this chapter, I have argued that there are qualities of encounters, such as watershed moments and institutional inefficaciousness, which yield situational inequality. Additionally, I mapped three routes that can lead to the emergence of more enduring forms of inequality: chains of encounters that generate situational inequalities, individualistic pursuits of advancement, and exclusionary rituals. In sum, I emphasize that the situational ecologies of encounters, qualities of context and modes of interactions, shape the face of inequality in these institutions. This model offers a systemic way

to think about the emergence of inequality that goes beyond individuals' psychological motivations.

In addition, these hierarchy inducing structures may overlap; in doing so, they may reinforce each other and become rigid. This offers insight on the power of institutional inequalities. The nested and buttressing character of institutional inequalities is what makes them unyielding and allows them to overshadow inequalities rooted in grassroots esteem, except in those encounters that are informal, unstructured, or casual. This also helps us to understand how grassroots inequalities thrive in relative independence from institutional structures or when co-opted by existing institutional apparatus.

This focus on the interactional ecology of inequality must be contextualized within the broader agenda of the dissertation. These interactional ecologies are nothing more than empty conduits of interaction without the cultural trappings that are discussed in chapters three and five. In addition, all inequalities are not individualized. Inequalities may exist amongst groups and in the relationship between individuals and groups. Yet, it is necessary to understand the foundations of belonging to understand the tensions between individualistic pursuits and group affiliation.

Existing research on encounters and micro-level interaction mostly focuses on how order is maintained (Collins 2004a; Goffman 1959, 1961b, 1967; Scarborough 2013), but an expanded discussion of the role of context and their interactions as mediators of stratification is warranted (Knottnerus 2011; cf. Scarborough 2012). In the conclusion of this dissertation, I examine how this research contributes to our understandings of inequalities and belongings in late modernity.

Chapter 7. Moments and Their Men: A Sociology of Encounters

This concluding chapter highlights the theoretical and empirical relevance of this research. I reflect on how an analytical segregation of cultural architectures and interactional ecologies allows insight into the mechanics of belonging and inequality processes. In tandem, differentiating between institutional cultural infrastructures and grassroots cultural practices sets up a framework that informs how belongings and inequalities are both situational and sustained. I then illustrate how both macro-oriented understandings of social stratification and perspectives focused on individual narratives are complemented by an emphasis on cultural practices and interactional contexts. Empirically, a look into the lives of everyday Americans' institutional involvements—volunteering, training for a career, and socializing—helps us to understand community and the conditions that lead to inequality in late modern America. This research is timely as it shows how community is maintained in an era of heightened individualism, provisional commitments, and exacerbated inequality. I conclude with suggestions for further inquiry.

Introduction

The title of this dissertation was inspired by Erving Goffman's proclamation that sociologists should focus not on "men and their moments," but on "moments and their men." Goffman (1967:3) called for sociologists to move beyond a study of individuals and to study the social. Employing encounters as the primary unit of analysis, this dissertation examines the social worlds of firefighting, CrossFitting, and medicine in the spirit of Goffman's call.

Conceptualizing cultural architectures and interactional ecologies as analytically separated but intertwined social sources of belonging and inequality helps us to bring Goffman's static model to life. Differentiating between institutional infrastructure and people's grassroots practices further expands a model of how belongings and inequalities develop in face-to-face encounters. These insights allow us to understand how context and culture shape social life. I also inform how we can think of belongings and inequalities as either situational or sustained, which demonstrates how a sociology of encounters can do more than merely deconstruct the minutiae of face-to-face interactions.

Cultural Architectures

I have argued that culture is important for understanding situational belongings, but axiomatic for the development of sustained belongings. Sustained belonging—community that endures beyond the bounds of an encounter—relies upon complex cultural forms. These are the bases for bonds that endure as people navigate other encounters and institutions in their day-to-day lives. Thus, culture is the primary foundation of sustained belongings. On the other hand, cultural inequality is a result of both institutional and grassroots cultures. The enduring and interdependent qualities of institutions make institutionalized culture a more effective basis for sustained inequality. Meanwhile, esteem and respect provide powerful, but often fleeting, grounds for situational inequalities. In sum, institutionalized culture upholds durable inequalities, while people's on-the-ground cultural practices are the foundations of durable belongings.

These findings bring the power of culture into relief. People's cultural practices are central to sustained belongings, while sustained inequalities are upheld by institutional practices. The grassroots cultural values and practices of groups define meaningful membership and deep belongings. It is the ritualistic exchange of this charged culture in face-to-face encounters that is at the interactional foundation of belonging. On the other hand, organizational cultural distinctions such as ranking, job, title, and roles are durable bases of inequality. These organizational inequalities become powerful sources of stratification when they find traction among the cultural dispositions and practices of those inhabiting the organization.

Yet, not all culture matters all the time. When we look at the relevant inequalities in any given encounter, it may include one's social class, organizational rank, or imposition of one's tastes. Inequalities and belongings alike are a result of a matrix of factors that are contextually activated and become situationally relevant to specific encounters. The implication of this is that

while factors like social class and nationality structure life chances, these are not always the qualities that lead to situational or sustained belongings or inequalities. Macro-cultural characteristics often lead to initial group involvement, but these also often become latent bases of inequality among institutions with strong organizational cultures and insular or homogenous collectives. I emphasize that meso-institutional culture plays an important role in the lived experience of inequality.

Sustained belongings are the result of strong cultural foundations built of people's on-the-ground cultural practices. The culture of a collective is the foundation of belonging. Meanwhile, culture also plays a role in sustained inequalities. I argue that the overlapping and interdependent qualities of institutions make inequalities rooted in institutional distinctions more durable than those rooted in grassroots culture.

Interactional Ecologies

Culture alone does not paint the full picture of solidarity or hierarchy. Context and the modes of interaction within encounters also matter in meaningful ways. Throughout the dissertation, I argue that qualities of encounters provide interactional ecologies of belonging and inequality. In particular, I find that interactional ecology is central to situational belongings and inequalities. I also show that certain modes of ritual interaction activate meaningful culture that bonds and divides.

Qualities of encounters matter. Interdependency, intimacy, and shared hardship are just a few of the contextual qualities that generate situational belonging. While encounters with these qualities yield belonging, ritualistic action places a static ecological model in motion by adding process. Ritual is the interactional vehicle for activating the meaningful culture that is so consequential for belongings and inequalities.

Rituals can be institutional or rooted in people's everyday practices. Institutional rituals are excellent at integrating individuals into large collectives, though people's everyday practices are more likely to activate culture that is evocative to a small group. Additionally, more complex and charged cultural meanings and practices can be activated in small groups to yield deep, sustained belongings. These are interactional vehicles that perform boundary or integration work by mobilizing simple forms of culture for a collective of any size. Meanwhile, rituals of exclusion or individualism produce hierarchy from within encounters. In sum, rituals are consequential modes of interaction that integrate or divide, especially when these activate evocative culture.

By highlighting the role of culture, this model of interactional ecologies allows Goffman's interaction ritual theory to be extended in a sociological manner. This helps us to move past Collins' (1981; 1989; 2004a) model of "interaction ritual chains," which is based on the presupposition that we are predisposed psychologically to seek out interaction by a "fundamental human desire for solidarity" (Couch 1989:60). Collins asserts that "feelings of solidarity within a social coalition are fundamental" (1981:1006). Instead of adding psychology to Goffman's model of interaction ritual as Collins does (cf. Fine 2005), I suggest a more sociological reading of Goffman (cf. Cahill 2000). I look to the interaction order for the social foundations of solidarity. Sidestepping whether there is an innate drive for interaction, I theorize that feelings are a social derivative of interactional contexts and culture. This reading and extension of Goffman is more sociological than Collins' interpretation, which is predicated on psychological foundations.

Contributions to the Study of Encounters

My goal in this dissertation is to present a sociological model of situational and sustained belongings and inequalities. Adopting the encounter as my unit of analysis, I highlight the utility of analytically segregating cultural architectures and interactional ecologies.

This separate examination of culture and interactional context is an analytical one that helps me to explicate how culture and context both matter in encounters. In all encounters, at all times, there are cultural architectures and interactional ecologies of belonging and inequality at work. Analyzing them separately helps us to demystify the social foundations of belongings and inequalities. Of course, these belonging- and inequality-facilitating qualities of encounters are not mutually exclusive. They overlap and act in concert, sometimes at odds, to yield different outcomes. A focus on encounters also helps us to understand how individuals can at the same time have multiple belongings and experience multiple inequalities, as each encounter has those who belong, those who are outsiders, those who have esteem, and those who are stigmatized.

This work brings us a few steps closer to developing a general micro-sociological theory of belonging and inequality in encounters (cf. Collins 2004a; Fine 2012; McPhail 1991; Turner 2010). Following Goffman's stringent efforts to order the micro-social world, this research contributes to the broader field of sociology by illustrating how an analysis of encounters complements other sociological perspectives, including those that order individual narratives and those that analyze macro-social, sociodemographic data. Mapping the interactional roots of belongings and inequalities yields practical knowledge for occupational, civic, and social groups.

Limitations

While most contemporary sociology focuses on the individual at the expense of a detailed analysis of encounters, this dissertation suffers from the inverse shortcoming. A focus on

encounters as social systems that shape human behavior limits the depth of analysis into the individual. Though I conducted interviews to supplement my participant observation, another version of this project might have selected a single population and included additional interviews that accounted for the biographies of individuals. A project that privileged a focus on individuals might also produce a different sort of conclusion by mapping individual careers of belonging and inequality over time and across institutions.

There are always concerns about the idiosyncratic character of groups and the generalizability of findings from ethnographic cases. In particular, these groups vary in the demographics of their population, amount of time spent together, and reasons for involvement. As a result, even those processes and behaviors that were observed across all three populations or in a range of encounters cannot be generalized to all populations or all encounters. While qualitative findings are not universally generalizable, this dissertation achieved its goal of offering a fresh micro-sociological perspective on taken for granted or overlooked aspects of social reality to generate testable empirical and theoretical hypotheses.

A final limitation is the ethnographer. No two ethnographers are attentive to all of the same processes, objects, or ideas in the field. Throughout the work, I tried to see each world and to understand specific interactions from a variety of perspectives. In particular, I used interviews to understand these worlds through the eyes of those who constituted these social spaces. Though I got in close to my subjects, even inhabiting two of my three contexts as a full participant, an ethnographer always interprets a social world and its people through her/his own eyes.

Applying a Sociology of Encounters

In a modernity where our connections to others are stressed and traditional sources of identity and morality are strained or waning, a model of belongings and inequalities that is rooted

in encounters has practical applications. Rather than delving into the variable psychology of individuals or attempting to assess bonds in relation to atrophying institutions, a focus on encounters provides a sociological approach that is fitting for times of institutional flux or degradation, such as in late modern America.

Contemporary America is experiencing exacerbated economic segregation, rampant individualism, and fleeting or wispy connections. Social and civic engagement is waning and stocks of social capital are on the decline, particularly among the working class (Putnam 2000; Putnam et al. 2012; Smith 2007). Traditional sources of belonging, such as family, religion, social class, and residential communities, are atrophying and no longer providing stable sources of belonging (Bauman 2003, 2011; Illouz 2007; Diken and Laustsen 2005; Kingston 2000). Yet, there is evidence that belongings are emerging in new places (Bender 1979; Fischer 2010; Illouz 2007). In the climate of eroding institutions, our belongings are fleeting and situational. A "liquid" modernity pushes people to form provisional bonds through constant interactional work in order to feel a sense of solidarity (Bauman 2003, 2011).

A look into the lives of everyday Americans' institutional involvements—volunteering, training for a career, and socializing—helps us to understand the bases of community and the conditions that lead to inequality in contemporary America. I find that both working-class and upper-middle-class people locate community in nontraditional institutions. Volunteer firefighters often experience alienating work conditions in their day jobs and are involved in few other institutions, which led many to invest heavily in their involvement in the fire department (cf. Desmond 2007; Smith 1972). The physicians I studied find satisfaction and community at work, but this is paired with meaningful belongings among trusted peers in their cohort, specialization, or work groups. CrossFit, on the other hand, is a manufactured community of belonging and is

constituted and upheld by voluntary, paying participants who are seeking out someplace to find an existing social network that celebrates the notion of community (cf. Ferenstein 2011).

Inequality pervades these institutions. At Southern Academic Healthcare System, an institutionally regulated hierarchy upholds a strict social order, but this is paired with individualistic rituals and a culture of competition that only exacerbates formal inequality among young physicians. Meanwhile, at Alliance CrossFit, inequality is objectively rooted in the physical abilities and learned skills of its members. Nevertheless, the institutionalized rituals paired with the egalitarian practices of its participants help offset objective inequality. At Monacan Fire, ranks are institutionalized and a formal hierarchy is upheld on the fireground, but the firehouse is a different story. There, everyday ritualistic practices such as "catwalking" and "late-night scrounging" facilitate a "brotherhood" that pervades the firehouse.

I find there to be idiosyncratic cultural differences across all three groups, but there are also common mechanics to their cultural architectures and interactional ecologies that result in belongings and inequalities. Rather than qualities of individuals or macro-institutional affiliations, it is qualities of encounters, meso-institutional distinctions, and grassroots practices that bring people together and yield hierarchy. Micro-situational dominance and connection—the kind experienced in face-to-face encounters—is but tenuously connected to hierarchic and macro conceptions of economic, political, and cultural power. The interactional ecologies of encounters and group cultures provide powerful and predictable guides for understanding the behaviors of their constituents.

I do not contend that men and women are merely wind-up toys that perform predictable behaviors when placed in motion, but we can draw a parallel between the behaviors of people and those of wind-up toys. Much like a wind-up toy, people have predictable routines that they

deploy in interactions (Goffman 1959). Contexts limit outcomes and guide calculable routines. Meanwhile, culture not only colors the displays, but plays an active role in connection and hierarchy. Understanding the ways that interactional ecologies limit and cultural architectures shape behavior helps us to map situational and sustained belongings and inequalities. We must be mindful of the ways moments shape their men.

Adding to the findings of research highlighting correlations between sociodemographic qualities and inequalities, I show how hierarchies play out in face-to-face encounters. This research offers a framework that helps us to understand why sociodemographic characteristics are only sometimes structuring by looking to the shared meanings and interactional qualities that are salient in particular encounters. Rather than being ordered by macro-identifications, institutional or group cultures often provide the bases of belongings and inequalities.

Beyond emphasizing the role of culture, I map how interactional ecologies lead to inequality. The scarcity of resources and the cultural significance of certain rituals are likely to lead to the emergence of hierarchy. This helps us to dispel achievement as merely the result of meritocratic individuals directing their own fortunes. Certain encounters can flatten hierarchy, while others emphasize it. Similarly, certain shared cultures emphasize individual achievement, while others are collectivist and negate hierarchy. This sociological focus disassociates the roots of belongings and inequality from the individual and locates these in the interactional ecology and cultural architecture of the encounter.

Future Research

Unfettered inquiry paves the way to progress. Erving Goffman's epistemological recklessness and willingness to theorize in pursuit of universal truths is part of what contributes to his broad and lasting appeal among social scientists and humanists (cf. Fine, Manning, and

Smith 2000; Handler 2012).[47] Goffman once admitted, "There isn't an easy way to do this work, and I'm not sure it's worthwhile doing it in a realistic and responsible fashion" (Goffman in Verhoeven 1993:323). Nonetheless, Goffman devoted a lifetime to critical inquiry of the normative order of everyday life. In the final paragraph of his final work (Goffman 1983:17), he calls for a meticulous examination of social life: "unsponsored analyses of the social arrangements enjoyed by those with institutional authority…in a position to give official imprint to versions of reality." Sociology would benefit from more critical inquiry, with a touch of irresponsibility, in the spirit of Erving Goffman.

Goffman aimed to examine the interactional processes of everyday life. Too much research focuses on elites and on cases with journalistic appeal, while not enough focuses on everyday people (Gans 2014; Milner 2015:ix). Like Goffman, I call for more researchers to focus on the everyday. While it could be said that "only a schmuck studies his own life" (Goffman in Fine 2009), a study of the everyday life undoubtedly offers insights into the lives that most of us experience on a day-to-day basis. This is the framework for a sociology of the people. In many ways, this helps us to exercise our sociological imaginations to make the familiar unfamiliar and to understand society through the behavior of social actors (Mills 1959).

Future research might also seek out more heterogeneous populations for a systematic examination of how sociodemographic characteristics lead to belongings and inequalities. Among the predominantly white and male populations I studied, I found that differentiation leads to inequality in the firehouse, while the strong collectivist culture at Alliance CrossFit included

[47] Goffman's research suffered from sampling issues as he would draw at will from his fieldwork, personal life, and wide reading in history, biography, manners, social science, and literature. Constructing theory inductively from multiple illustrations demonstrates that phenomena exists (Glaser and Strauss 1967), but there are epistemological issues with constructing theory in this manner (Popper [1934] 1959). Further, this approach does not demonstrate systematic connections among social phenomena (Black 1995, 2000).

rituals that celebrated egalitarianism and differences. This suggests that shared culture is a consequential lens for interpreting differentiation as a basis for belonging or inequality. Research on intra-ethnoracial differences (Jiménez, Fields, and Schachter 2015) and post-binary conceptions of gender and sexuality (Fine 2010) suggests that the cultural meaning-making of individuals on these topics warrants further sociological attention.

Another angle of inquiry might expand on the notion of encounters as social systems (cf. Luhmann 1995; Parsons 1951). I have shown that encounters are not merely the sum of individuals' values and interests; encounters have an independent effect on their participants. This research suggests that encounters provide better predictors of individual lines of action than psychological and phenomenological accounts. People are not as creative or as independent as they suppose. Even when individuals are not functioning on autopilot, most behaviors are routine and predictable. Thinking of encounters as systems and mapping how interactional order leads to various lines of actions and social outcomes are valuable contributions to sociology.

Face-to-face encounters are not the only place where belonging occurs. Future work can help us to better understand how belongings and inequalities operate across trans-local and virtual populations in the age of participatory media. Firefighters, CrossFitters, and physicians are all shaped by culture producers who share their content online. Much of culture is learned from the internet: CrossFitters acquire suggestions on diet and difficult movements, physicians "google" the drugs they prescribe, and firefighters seek out "tricks of the trade" and learn lessons from real-life incidents shown on helmet-camera videos posted to the web. People in all three contexts are shaped by the products and actions of virtual institutions and their personalities. Future work might find virtual and trans-local communities where there is active participation in new media and examine the differences in belonging and inequality processes between face-to-

face and online communities. Symbolic interactionists (Blumer 1969) alert researchers to attend to all meaningful interactions and ideas, either face-to-face or online, as viable sites for sociological analysis. Of course, Goffman (1974) would likely suggest that a different "frame" is needed for a proper analysis.

There is much work yet to be done. In the spirit of Erving Goffman's incisive examination of the micro-social (cf. Bourdieu 1983), I have shown how culture and context yield belonging and inequality in encounters. Yet, this is but one piece in a fully realized analysis of face-to-face relations in everyday life. Rather than inquiring further into the individual, sociologists should turn their attention to the social and develop a sociology of encounters.

> Not, then, men and their moments. Rather moments and their men. – Erving Goffman

Appendix A. Observation Checklist

This project will collect ethnographic data in two ways. At multiple ethnographic field sites, I will observe the qualities of context and culture that produce connection and hierarchy. During my observation, I will seek to collect data on all aspects of the interaction amongst participants as contextualized within the environment. I am concerned with detailing the following:

- Context
    - What are the qualities of the physical environment?
        - How does it constrain or facilitate interaction?
    - What are the qualities of the social scene?
        - Are the people in the encounter homogenous or heterogeneous?
        - In what circumstances are there interpersonal interactions?
            - Is the encounter structured or unstructured?
        - Is the group established or emergent?
        - Are economic and political concerns salient to this context?

- Verbal component:
    - How are status concerns being negotiated through the use of language?
    - How do interactants talk to each other?
        - Is the dialogue formal or informal?
            - What are the subjects being discussed?
    - Regarding language, is there any observable dominance or deference amongst the actors?
        - Are some members silenced?
    - How do interactants talk to outsiders (those who are not a member of their collective compared to insiders)?

- Visual component:
    - What types of nonverbal communication can be observed?
    - How do interactants convey their status or belonging visually?
    - What cultural styles, dress, body ornamentation, style, goods, or cultural objects are displayed as part of interactants' presentation work?
        - Does this vary across situations?
        - When and how do participants mobilize subcultural capital?
        - What happens when interactants mobilize the "wrong" culture for the situation?
    - Visually, is there any observable dominance or deference amongst the actors?

- Kinesthetic component:
    - How do performers use their bodies to generate status or find community?
        - How is movement or motion incorporated into the pursuit of connection or status?
    - Is there variation amongst participants?
        - Is there stratification amongst interactants based upon level or type of kinesthetic activity?

- Instrumental Action:
    - How are status concerns or community being negotiated through individual or group activity?
    - What is the collective goal of participants?
    - Does there seem to be divergent views amongst interactants as to what the goal of the interaction should be?
        - How do select interactants dominate the immediate encounter?
        - How do select interactants determine the future goals of the social unit?
    - Is there a correlation between abilities and the status of members?

Specific processes to detail:

- Conflicts
    - What is the cause of conflict?
    - Is it a power struggle?
    - Do the factions of the conflict display cultural differences?
    - What is the outcome?
        - Who gains or loses status based upon the outcome of the interaction?
        - Does a win correlate with status gain?

- Power Dynamics
    - In what conditions is hierarchy emphasized?
    - Is there a leadership / power hierarchy?
        - Is it formal or informal?
        - Is someone is charge?
    - Do those in positions of authority dictate the actions of participants?

- Situations with non-instrumental action
    - In absence of a specific task, who do social actors associate with?
        - Do patterns of interactions correlate with formal groups?
        - Do social actors only socialize amongst those persons of similar occupational or social positions?
    - What action is taken and what topics are discussed?
    - How does action change when there is an audience of insiders or outsiders?

- Ceremonies
    - What is the function of the ceremony?
    - Why are honors bestowed upon specific individuals?
    - Do participants acknowledge the value of the award?

- Interaction Rituals
    - What are the interaction rituals in the context?
    - How is culture displayed in interaction rituals?
    - When do interactions fail?
    - Do interaction rituals define insiders and outsiders?

- Culture in Interaction
    - What forms of embodied, objectified, and institutionalized culture are deployed in face-to-face interaction?
    - How is culture mobilized in face-to-face interaction?
    - Does the display of culture or the lack of cultural display result in connection or status outcomes?

Appendix B. Pre-Interview Information Sheet

1. What is your current age? _____
2. What is your gender? [ ] male [ ] female
3. How would you characterize yourself (select all that apply):

   [ ] African-American/Black [ ] Asian [ ] Hispanic/Latino

   [ ] Native American or Alaskan Native [ ] Pacific Islander [ ] White

4. What is the highest grade of school or degree that you have received?

   [ ] Some High School [ ] High School Diploma/GED [ ] Some College

   [ ] Associate's Degree [ ] Bachelor's Degree [ ] Graduate or Professional Degree

5. What is your occupation? _____
6. Are you married? _____
7. Do you have children? _____
8. What organizations, civic groups, religious groups, or social groups are you involved with on regular basis? (list approximate number of hours per week)

9. What are your non-occupational activities? (list approximate number of hours per week)

Appendix C. Interview Schedule

I. Introduction

- Have the interviewee sign and fill out IRB form and "Pre-Interview Information Sheet"
- Introduce the interview
    - These are opinions; there is no right or wrong response
    - Feel free to answer in professional, personal, or social terms
    - The questions may seem strange, as the study is comparative
    - If possible, please provide an example, rather than belief statements

II. You and the Organization

- Can you tell me the story of how you got involved in this group?
    - Were there other possible choices?
- Can you recall the moment when you decided that this was for you?
- What is it that brings you here each day?
    - Can you offer an example of an event that illustrates why you want to be here?
- What's it like being involved here?
    - Probe: culture, actions, pride
- What's your place here?
    - What's it like being a _____?
    - How do you think others in this field perceive you?
- Does your involvement here include a specialization of any kind?
    - Is there anything that makes your role unique?
- Can you tell me about the most difficult situation that you've faced here?
    - How did you get through it?
    - Why keep coming back?
- Can you tell me about one of your favorite experiences that you've had here?
    - What was it about the encounter that made it so great?
- Would you consider this field to be "a calling" for you?
- Would you label yourself "a professional?" Why or why not?
- Do you think your involvement here defines who you are?
    - The person who your colleagues and peers know, is that the real you?

III. Belonging in the Organization

- What are the meaningful events or ceremonies that occur here?
    - Can you give an example and explain why these were meaningful to you?
- Within this place, what experiences have brought you close to others?
- Who do you most closely identify with here?
    - Can you tell me about how one or two of your closest relationships here developed?

- How does one fit in here?
    - Probe: social, professional, cultural, corporeal
        - Can you recall a specific incident that made you feel like you fit in here or did not fit in?
- Is there a unique way of interacting with others in this place?
- Is there a moral code of conduct here?
- What idiosyncrasies make this place special?

IV. Distinction in the Organization

- Who do people look up to here? How does one make a name for themselves?
    - What are the characteristics that get the attention of others?
    - Can you think of an example of someone who has gone from anonymous to admired?
        - Probe: process, events, ceremonies
- Are there winners and losers here?
    - Can you offer examples of a winner or a loser?
    - Probe: professional and social
- What are the ways that people are divided here? (formal and informal)
    - Probe: race, gender, age, class, career/volunteer, experience, skill
    - If you identify with one of these groups, how did this happen?
- Can you think of conditions when these groupings are salient/important?
- Can you think of circumstances when these groups don't hold up?
- Can you tell me about someone who *doesn't* fit in here?
    - What makes them stand out?
    - Can you recall an incident that shows why they're "wrong" for this place?
        - Probe: professional and social
- Can you think of a circumstance where those in positions of institutional power are not the same people who get respect?
- Can you discuss how your opinion of people may not align with the formal hierarchy?

V. Variation across Institutions

- How is this place different from others like it?
- How are you different in this context compared with others such as at home or with friends?
    - Discuss other organizations from "Pre-Interview Information Sheet"
- Can you think of a time when you felt the two places or identities clashed or blended together?

VI. Conclusion

- How have things changed around here since you arrived?
    - Have you changed or has the context changed?
- How has your perspective on this institution changed since you've been here?
- Is there anything that didn't come up that you'd like to mention?
- Thank interviewee

Group Specific Questions

- Physicians:
    - How are people in your specialization different from others?
        - Culturally, how is the feel different?
    - How has your perspective on the medical field changed as you've progressed?
        - Probe: undergrad, coursework, rotations, and residency

- Firefighters
    - What are your thoughts on career/volunteer firefighter relations?
        - Do you change the way that you act around the career guys?
    - What is the difference between a career and volunteer firefighter?
    - What do you think about the expansion of the career system in this county?
    - How do you think this station is different from others?

- CrossFitters
    - What does one's body or physical condition have to do with being successful at CrossFit?
    - Have you been to any other CrossFit gyms?
        - Can you give an example that describes how this gym is unique?
    - Why is CrossFit worth more money than other gyms?
    - What do you think about CrossFit being mostly composed of highly educated whites?
    - CrossFit has been accused of being "like a cult." What are your thoughts on that?

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