The Metaphors We Help By

by

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ABSTRACT

As universities, nonprofits, community foundations, and governmental organizations proliferate the language of leadership development and social transformation, it is with an inadequate understanding of what agency is being provoked. With an emphasis on ‘career-focused’ tools and techniques in community development literature and pedagogy, there is too little understanding of the knowledge being drawn upon and created by community workers (CWs). Furthermore, this knowledge is often tacit, bodily, spiritual, and collective, making it even more alien to the empiricism-focused world of social science. Situated meaning-making must be recapitulated in the study of community development in order to better address the complexity and ambiguity of specific practices and the associated construction of identities.

This study suggests an alternative way to understand and analyze community development work. Building on fieldwork in the Kumaoni Himalaya of India, it is argued that community workers make sense of the world in large part through the co-construction of dialectic identity metaphors (DIMs). These DIMs help explain to the workers the way the world works, the way it does not work, and what to do about it. More than formal community development theory, I suggest community workers look to dominant DIMs to structure organizational vision and program creation. Furthermore, ideological fragments within local DIMs contribute to the reproduction of dominant ways of knowing and the creation of best practices. For this reason, in situ examination of DIM creation and maintenance is useful for understanding how and why CWs collectively construct their identities and the co-constitutive work.
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The community workers at the Central Himalayan Environment Association, Pan-Himalayan Grassroots Development Foundation, and Society for Uttaranchal Development and Himalayan Action were incredibly hospitable, knowledgeable, and even vulnerable throughout my time in Kumaon. This work is dedicated to their determination and compassion to make life a little easier for the women and men of the central Himalaya.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIST OF TABLES</th>
<th>vi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER

1 INTRODUCTION ................................................................. 1

2 ABOUT INTERPRETATION .......................................................... 9
   Interpretive Research Design .................................................. 13
   Intertextuality and Mapping for Exposure .................................. 15
   Reflective Practice, Sense-Making, and Explanatory Coherence ....... 21
   Final Notes on My Use of Language ....................................... 24

3 ABOUT COMMUNITY WORKERS IN KUMAON .................................. 27
   Stories of Backwardness and Modernity .................................... 27
   Stories of Drudgery and Happiness ......................................... 33
   Stories of Corruption and Honesty ......................................... 37
   The Interaction of Stories and Identity .................................... 41

4 ABOUT IDENTITY ................................................................. 43
   Two Streams of Identity Study ............................................... 44
   Identity as a Dialectic Relationship ....................................... 46
   The Backward/Modern Dialectic Identity Metaphor ...................... 48
   The Drudgery/Happiness Dialectic Identity Metaphor .................... 50
   The Corruption/Honesty Dialectic Identity Metaphor .................... 52
# Chapter 3: Dialectic Identity Metaphors as Shared Identity

- How Do DIMs Suggest Preferred Readings?..................................................57
- To What Meaning-Making Do DIMs Contribute?..........................................59
- How Does a Preferred Reading Manifest in Collective Action?......................62
- How Does a Philosophy of Change Become a Best Practice?.........................64

# Chapter 4: About Development in Kumaon

- Indian Visions of Development........................................................................67
- Development in Kumaon................................................................................71
- Development and Kumaoni NGO Discourse..................................................75

# Chapter 5: About Ideology

- Gandhian Ideologies of Development in Kumaoni CW Practices.......................79
- Nehruvian Ideologies of Development in Kumaoni CW Practices......................83
- Mixed Messages and Meanings......................................................................87

# Chapter 6: About Teleological Visions in Kumaon

- Bhattacharyya’s Definition of Community Development..................................92
- A Teleological Vision for Kumaon.....................................................................97
- The Moment of Community Development.......................................................98

# Chapter 7: Conclusion

- My Own Meaning Structures.........................................................................100
- The Metaphors We Help By............................................................................102
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Relationship Between Theory and Practice</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LITERATURE CITED</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A OTHER SOURCES OF REVELATION</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table                                      Page
1. Summary of National and Local Government Control of Kumaon..........................69
2. Gandhian Themes as Ideological Fragments in Kumaoni CW Practice.........................75
3. Nehruvian Themes as Ideological Fragments in Kumaoni CW Practice........................80
LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. India</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Kumaon</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

A question has lingered for me since I first discovered the academic study of community development: How did I never hear of this before? By the time I joined the School of Community Resources and Development at Arizona State University (ASU), I had been working with nonprofits involved in community work for nearly 15 years, consulted with dozens of different types of community-based organizations all across the United States, been an executive director twice, and earned a master’s degree in transformational leadership in the context of community work. In all that time, in all those settings, I had never heard of ‘community development’ and yet here I was, meeting with scholars who were part of an entire field dedicated to it. I could not help but wonder whether I was simply blind to something that had always been present in the diverse settings I frequented, or if these two worlds existed without much overlap.

In the various community development (CD) research venues in which I have participated since joining ASU, it has always lingered in the back of my mind that the theoretical work being done in academia was largely unknown by the community practitioners among which I had previously worked. The occasional overlap certainly existed. Robert Putnam’s (2001) *Bowling Alone* has been passed around both practitioner and academic circles, informing both scholarly research and community-based thinking. But other than a few “public intellectuals” whose books became popular, the literature being produced by CD academics was largely absent from the circles that I had navigated. For that reason, even though approaches like Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) were known to me, they were largely used in uncritical ways by
consultants promising results that few communities seemed to realize. That any of this work (e.g., Putnam and ABCD) was connected to academia was unknown to me, and I would guess to many of my colleagues in communities of practice.

When I arrived at ASU I began to think more deeply about community practice and the process of sense-making among community workers. As I was exposed in my studies to formal community development theory I saw a disconnection between them and the practices that I had been present to in the past. Still, it seemed too much to say that no theory guided practitioner approaches. I began to wonder what characterized the sense-making processes of community workers. The process of legitimization among practitioners was certainly distinct from that of academics, but in my opinion, no less effective. The epistemological (way of knowing) purity that academe professed has been in my view no more pure than the trial and error, wonder and reflection that takes place in the board rooms and living rooms of nonprofits and community groups.

It began to occur to me that the process of sense-making that community workers undertake was not only a key aspect of collective action in situ, it was often done with little attention to how that sense-making process interacts with the construction of shared identities as ‘change agents’, ‘helpers’, or something similar. As universities, nonprofits, community foundations, and governmental organizations proliferate the language of leadership development and social transformation, it is with an inadequate understanding of what agency is being provoked. With an emphasis on ‘career-focused’ tools and techniques in community development literature and pedagogy, it seemed to me that far too little time was put into understanding the knowledge being drawn upon and created
by CWs. Furthermore, this knowledge was often tacit, bodily, spiritual, and collective, making it even more alien to the empiricism-focused world of social science.

It was my experience that the practices of community workers were considered legitimate only up to the point at which they were seen as contradictory to the ‘evidence-based’ arguments put forth by academics. Tacit knowledge, bodily knowledge, and any other ‘non-empirically-based’ foundations for knowing were the easiest target for winning a disagreement. An asymmetrical balance of power seemed to exist between ways of knowing despite everyday speech in academia espousing the virtue of epistemological diversity. Ways of knowing were not just different, they were hierarchically ordered according to legitimacy.

As I have watched the rise of the discourse of ‘evidence-based’ knowledge in political, social, educational, and community-based organizations, the rhetorical aim has been clear. ‘Evidence-based’ knowledge has been rhetorically introduced to policy, administrative, and nonprofit/NGO communication in a political attempt to offer special status to certain epistemologies while undermining the claim of legitimacy by others (see Antaki & Horowitz, 2010 for an interesting related discussion). The temptation to ignore this is admittedly present for me. I am often politically and epistemologically aligned with the groups putting forth this language, and to the extent that the rhetoric may help achieve the policy aims I have for society, the approach has its apparent upside. Yet, I am bothered by the implications of adopting such a strategy, particularly in the context of creating a more just and peaceful world.

Epistemological de-legitimization is a quick, but dehumanizing route to winning an argument. When a person or group is faced with the political stubbornness of their
other in the form of differentiated ways of knowing, there is a common sense of frustration directed at the epistemology of one’s other. One may retort to a comrade, “I cannot believe they think that is true!” Or, “How can they just ignore the facts?” Since one tends to see one’s own conclusions as rational and natural, it stands to reason that one’s disagreeing other is neither rational nor accepting of what is naturally apparent (see also, Foucault, 1995; Hall, 2013 on knowledge and power; Rist, 2014 on the same in the history of development). But once a person’s other is seen as irrational and one who cannot see the naturally apparent, it becomes justifiable to question their other’s human agency, right to participate in democratic deliberation, and even their very humanity (see Sen, 2009). The employment of rhetoric regarding the superiority of evidence-based claims need not necessarily lead to dispossession and disenfranchisement, but it certainly has before and could again (see Smith, 2012). Perhaps more pressing is the need to address a fundamental flaw in the philosophical presuppositions of evidence-based rhetoric (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012).

Behind this appeal to evidence-based knowledge is an assumption that evidence reveals unassailable, undeniable truths that do not need to be accompanied by the flawed process of human interpretation (Yanow, 2006). Of course, this is a highly contested assumption. For reasons that I will further explore in the next chapter, interpretation is a necessary and appropriate part of knowing. We do not know things purely or absolutely upon encounter (Hall, 1973/2006; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003). Instead, we make sense of the world by pulling upon meaning structures, metaphors, and collectively constructed ideas in order to understand and communicate what we encounter (Hall,
1973/2006; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). This study is precisely an exercise in such sense-making.

By placing the messiness of human sense-making back at the center of this epistemology, it is hoped that a more nuanced, less violent process of meaning-making can be explored. For example, I later utilize words that may be jarring to the western ear, such as ‘backward’ and ‘drudgery’, that were provided by the community workers and NGOs in the this study. These words have deep contextual meaning. A post-colonial perspective may argue to include them or exclude them based on their situated character. In this case, I use them in the titles of two sense-making processes precisely to call attention to their place in the sense-making of community workers in northern India who are, by their own description, trying to help their communities. It is in this messiness, asking how to understand the actions and meanings of a situated group, that the ambiguous, complex character of community work can be more deeply engaged. Then one can begin to weigh the contextual knowledge attached to a word such as ‘backward’ or ‘drudgery’ as very real parts of the in situ meaning-making process and further consider the social, political, and economic implications that are co-constitutive.

This process of sense-making, then, recapitulates human complexity with no promise of absolutes. Rather, the work that follows attempts to understand contextual meanings with the added layer of inquirer interpretation. It is, furthermore, a practice of privilege to engage in such a process of inquiry, as little room for reciprocity exists between the community workers of Kumaon and myself. For that reason, this study is a further attempt to examine my own process of identity construction as a community worker. That is, in my own work as a practitioner and now as a privileged academic, it
seems only fair that I try to better understand something about myself. In this case, it is my history of being a ‘helper’ in community work that animates my curiosity. It is my assumption, based on 17 years of community work practitioner experience and having visited community workers on six continents and Oceania, that those of us who choose to work with the ‘community’ share a constructed identity as ‘helpers’. And that while identity is heavily contextual; some amount of shared meaning-making process may be found across situated groups at the location of sense-making for collective action.

The central identity-based relationship in community work is that between the “helper” and the “helped”. Although the best practices for practicing “help” are widely studied and contested (see e.g., Bhattacharyya, 2004; Matarrita-Cascante & Brennan, 2012; Toomey, 2011 for some CD debates), the basic impulse to help is rarely closely examined in CD literature. Why do we help? How do people see themselves when they are helping? What identities or other meaning structures support our choices of how to help? Where do “helpers” learn how to help and from what information do they draw in constructing projects, programs, and interventions? Despite the potentially large shifts in practice, which this understanding could lead to, these questions are given too little attention. However, when examined in situ, not only is the helper-helped relationship illuminated, so to is the relationship between theory and practice.

In an effort to understand how community development workers understand their work, I generated data in the Kumaoni Himalaya during the time frame of August through October 2015. This work reveals a deeper understanding of the processes by which community workers make sense of their worlds and construct avenues of collective action. It is, therefore, of significant importance for development agencies, nonprofit
administrators and scholars, leadership development pedagogy, public service academies, community development academics and practitioners, and countless others. In the next chapter, I explicate the philosophical presuppositions that undergird this inquiry, and suggest an interpretive paradigm in the study of community development. In so doing, I expand on the role of evidence in knowing and upon the particular process of inference used in this study. Specifically, I discuss Hall’s (1973/2006) description of the communication process and peoples’ reliance on meaning structures to interpret their world; as well as Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980/2003) description of conceptual metaphors that people draw upon in order to know one thing in terms of another.

In Chapter 3, I introduce the stories told by Kumaoni community workers, which are the center of this inquiry. Using three groups of stories, I offer examples of the data that was generated in Kumaon and the interpretive themes that emerged from initial sense-making. In Chapter 4 I offer an interpretation of the way identity is constructed among the participating Kumaoni community workers and introduce the concept of dialectical identity metaphors (DIMs) as a kind of Hallsian meaning structure. Specifically, I discuss the dialectical nature of identity-related metaphors that appear within the story themes illuminated in chapter three and how they act as a shared identity among Kumaoni community workers. Chapter 5 expounds on dialectic identity metaphors as meaning structures that are drawn upon in the process of knowledge construction and communication by these workers. Furthermore, I explain the role of DIMs in individuation, uncertainty reduction, the creation of moral imperatives, as vehicles for ideological reproduction, and as the basis for undertaking collective action.
Chapters 6 and 7 discuss the interaction of Kumaoni community worker DIMs with broader ideologies in Indian discourse regarding ‘development’. At the onset of Chapter 6, I introduce ‘development’ as a major ideological site of contestation in India with special attention to the legacies of Gandhi and Nehru as well as contextual histories in Kumaon. Then in Chapter 7, I demonstrate Gandhian and Nehruvian fragments of ideology in CW identity construction and practice while problematizing the nature of ideological fragments in meaning structures. Chapter 8 introduces the Bhattacharyyan (2004) interpretation of Teleological Theories as a useful concept for organizing the understanding of in situ community work with comments on the unit of evaluation in CD. Lastly, Chapter 9 offers a number of conclusions, including a summary of the arguments and interpretations set forth in this study. I will then make a final case for the importance of understanding the metaphors we help by as community workers, the usefulness of interpretive research design in that process, and offer closing thoughts on the relationship between theory and practice in community development.
Chapter 2

ABOUT INTERPRETATION

Interpretation is a defining character of human communication and knowledge. Because we do not know things in pure, absolute form, our knowledge is built through discursive, co-creative sense-making (Hall, 1973/2006; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). As we experience the world around us, we make sense of it through an interpretive process, drawing on the meaning-structures around us and rendering our experiences intelligible (Hall, 1973/2006). In order to communicate knowledge, it must be put into story form (Hall, 1973/2006; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003). This story form is organized into all kinds of shapes and sizes, from large meta-narratives about the nature of the universe or human existence to small conceptual metaphors describing the nature of an argument.

Stuart Hall (1973/2006) has described the process of communicating these stories as one of encoding and decoding. According to Hall (1973/2006), when a person experiences something, she makes that experience a communicative event by encoding it into story form. She does so by drawing on the meaning structures around her in order to encode the meanings and messages she wishes to communicate. Meaning structures are the socio-cultural, economic, and political narratives that are pre-coded by society (Hall, 1973/2006). Once that person has encoded her experience, having drawn upon the existing codes provided by meaning structures, her message and meaning now takes the form of discourse. Thus, she has interpreted her experience, using previous interpretations of the world, in order to create a new message. And having communicated
that new message, she has now contributed to an interpretive discourse. But, the interpretive fun is not over.

The receiver of this discursive message must now decode the meaning that the source is attempting to share (Hall, 1973/2006). The complexity of the communicative process can be seen here, as the receiver interprets an interpretation that was built upon previously constructed interpretations. Giddens (1986) has called this a double hermeneutic. In order to interpret this discursive meaning, the receiver decodes the message while also drawing upon the previously coded interpretations provided by the meaning structures at his disposal. The size or complexity of the message and meaning does not change this basic process, although it can add to the likelihood of miscommunication or misunderstanding. As Hall (1973/2006) has argued, “the degrees of “understanding” and “misunderstanding” in the communicative exchange... depend on the degrees of symmetry/asymmetry” between the meaning structures used by the “encoder-producer” of the message and the “decoded-receiver” (p. 166). And because the meaning structures that a person has at his disposal can vary quite widely from those at the disposal of his communicative partner, the likelihood of misunderstanding, or at least asymmetrical interpretation, is high. Still, there are large amounts of overlap between meaning structures that allow intelligible communication between sources and receivers to happen. The rules and norms of a given language are examples of this.

In order to facilitate communication, rules and norms of language remain relatively constant in a given language (Hall, 1973/2006) so that interpretation is able to occur in real-time. The pre-coded meanings yielded by a meaning-structure allow people to communicate complex meanings and messages despite the significant potential for
misunderstanding. In addition, these pre-coded meanings are shaped and formed by ideological interpretations of the way the world works. For example, describing a proposed piece of legislation as Socialist will communicate different connotations depending on the meaning structures one is drawing upon. One person may interpret this label as indicating loss of prosperity while another interprets the label as creation of prosperity. That is, meaning structures will provide fragments of ideology that suggest to a person drawing upon them a specific interpretation of an event or experience. The ideology contained within pre-coded meanings may not be fully formed, but certain “readings” of the world will be “preferred” (Hall, 1973/2006). If the meaning structures a person draws upon suggest a free-market, neo-liberal understanding of the world, the “preferred reading” of the label Socialist will be negative. Likewise, other preferred readings will suggest a variety of responses to the label.

Because language is a socially constructed system for making sense of the world, it is possible only to minimize asymmetry in interpretation (Hall, 1973/2006). Total symmetry of interpretation, even between just two people, can never be absolute as the personal experiences of an individual are never totally appropriated by another (Hall, 1973/2006; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). At the same time, interpretation is never completely individualized because knowing is a discursive process. The language one uses to interpret the world is a social product, discursively constructed. In this way, knowing is a social process. One way the asymmetry between meaning structures is reduced is through the social construction of conceptual metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003).
A conceptual metaphor can be understood as the preferred, pre-coded meaning in the structure of language. According to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980/2003), conceptual metaphors are the ways in which humans order and understand their lives by describing one thing in terms of another thing. As an example, Lakoff and Johnson (1980/2003) offer the conceptual metaphor \textit{argument is war}. In this conceptual metaphor, the word ‘argument’ is the concept being described through the metaphor of war. Because we do not have full, symmetrical intellectual knowledge of the concept ‘argument’, we draw upon discursive metaphors that help communicate partial meanings in order to construct a fuller understanding of the concept. Thus, the conceptual metaphor \textit{argument as war} summarizes a set of preferred readings derived from discourse about the concept ‘argument’. As linguistic examples, Lakoff and Johnson (1980/2003) cite commonly heard phrases about argument in a United States context including: “your claims are \textit{indefensible},” “his criticisms were \textit{right on target},” “he \textit{shot down} all my arguments,” “I \textit{demolished} his argument,” (p. 4, italics original emphasis). Importantly, these linguistic examples highlight at least two things that conceptual metaphors do. One, they provide interpretive understanding of the concept in question, allowing further intelligibility among communicators. Two, they highlight one set of interpretive understandings (in this case \textit{argument as war}) and subsequently direct attention away from another set of interpretive understandings (such as \textit{argument as dance}) (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003).

Hall (1973/2006) and Lakoff and Johnson (1980/2003) each demonstrate that the process of making sense of the world does not include equal consideration of all possible interpretations of meaning. The meaning structures one draws upon are ordered into
preferred hierarchies of interpretation. Thus, for each process of knowing and communicating, a set of dominant “readings” influences our interpretation. Hall (1973/2006) is quick to clarify that dominant is not the same as determinant. People can and do interpret the world outside of the dominant “readings” and conceptual metaphors. However, the “preferred meanings” that are embedded in language and knowledge help to direct learning and interpretation, making the very process of thinking and communicating outside those “preferred meanings” a difficult task (Hall, 1973/2006; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). Indeed, when a “preferred meaning” is especially dominant it can become experienced as “natural” or “self-apparent”, setting the boundaries for knowledge. Hall (1973/2006) has called these totalizations “hegemonic viewpoints”, which he says,

“(a) ...defines within its terms the mental horizon, the universe of possible meanings, of a whole sector of relations in a society or culture; and (b) ...carries with it the stamp of legitimacy – it appears coterminous with what is “natural”, “inevitable”, “taken for granted” about the social order (p. 172).”

The above descriptions of the process of knowledge construction and communication from Hall as well as Lakoff and Johnson, will act as the point of departure for this study.

*Interpretive Research Design*

As discussed above, the process of sense-making is a constant, necessary process for human knowledge and communication. It is upon this understanding that Qualitative-Interpretive research is based (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). The logic of inquiry in interpretive research design is founded on the assumption that contextual meaning can be
understood, in part, through *in situ* data generation and intertextual analysis (Yanow, 2006). While symmetrical knowledge of the kind discussed earlier in this chapter may not be possible, an examination of the meaning structures and discourses that a person or group draws upon to interpret the world can lead to increased understanding for the inquirer (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). Because significant overlap exists between the meaning structures upon which people draw, intelligibility is possible (Hall, 1973/2006). Furthermore, increased understanding between people or groups is possible as greater understanding of one another’s meaning structures and pre-coded messages are shared. Thus, the very act of ongoing communication is likely to render the meaning structure of one’s other more intelligible. In order to add academic rigor to this process, interpretive research design offers an iterative, recursive process of systematic sense-making.

Critical to comprehending interpretive research design is understanding that the instrument of inference is the inquirer (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012; Yanow, 2006, 2014). This presupposition is one reason why I use the phrase “data generation” rather than “data collection” throughout this work. This phrase demonstrates the co-creation of information that makes up any inquiry. In other words, the very act of inquiry is co-constructive of any data that is analyzed as the inquirer brings his interpretive lenses to the field. Interpretive researchers have critiqued the naturalized language of data collection as suggestive that data is just lying around, waiting to be found, ultimately unchanged by the processes of research. Because the instrument of inference in interpretive research is the inquirer, I use language that re-centers the process of data generation into the account of this study. Accordingly, this process of abductive inference is attentive to tensions and surprises between an inquirer’s expectations and experiences.
It is also worth a brief mention regarding the language of “study”. While the interpretive process of knowledge construction and communication is difficult to bound in time due to its double hermeneutical nature, it is still accurate to refer to a bounded “study” or “inquiry”. However, referring to a specific “study” or “inquiry” represents bounded intention rather than bounded interpretation. In this “study” I draw upon a lifetime of sense-making, utilizing meaning structures that are dynamic across time. However, the intentional process of inquiry is bounded in time, beginning with a discussion in March 2015 with an Indian colleague who first suggested Kumaon as a site for research of community work. Therefore, when I refer to “this study”, I am giving special reference to all the sense-making that I have done since March 6, 2015 up to the completion of this written work, and particularly the intentional processes of research in which I have systematically engaged.

It is to that systematic engagement that I turn in the remainder of this chapter. Building on the hermeneutic traditions of Gadamer (1975/2013), Goffman (1959), and others, the interpretive approach ensures quality of scholarship through methods such as mapping for exposure, intertextuality, reflexivity, and explanatory coherence (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). Because interpretive research design builds upon these themes in systematic ways, each deserves explication. I will now explore these methods in the context of this study.

*Intertextuality and Mapping for Exposure*

Within interpretive research design, texts are one term given to the various forms of data being generated and analyzed. Intertextuality is a well-established method for
reading across texts to look for interpretive consistency (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). Biblical scholars, historians, and rhetoricians use this hermeneutic approach in order to allow related texts to interpret one another, thereby facilitating an interpretive circle among texts. These methods are not limited to literary, spoken, or otherwise written texts, but can be applied to the interpretation of actions as well (Foss, 2009; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). For that reason, actions can be seen as a sort of text. As data is generated in multiple forms, the meanings of each text are understood in the context of its related meanings. In this way, the clarity of individual messages and meanings in a given text is strengthened through iterative and recursive hermeneutic interpretation.

In the process of interpretive research, the question may be asked, “what is the meaning being made here?” or “what is going on here?” and a tentative interpretation may be made. It is tentative because the process of interpretation moves on to another similar text where further data is generated, and the meaning of both the new text and the former text are re-interpreted in light of the new relationship (sparked by the inquiry). Because the selection of texts has strong bearing on the intertextual sense-making process, reflective practice (discussed in the next section) and mapping for exposure are important elements of the method.

Mapping for exposure refers to both the process of selecting texts and the explanation for a particular text’s selection (Yanow, 2014). Again, I am referring to texts as including at a minimum any of the following: written documents, symbols, speeches or conversations, web pages, actions, and other expressions. And, it should be reiterated that interpretive presuppositions do not suppose data “collection” goes on here, as if any of these things are self-evident and can be understood without sense-making. Each text,
whether an action, book, or other, is understood through an interactive process of sense-making between the inquirer(s) and the text. Meaning is co-generated. So mapping for exposure is the reflective act of explaining the process for choosing data-generating spaces and sources.

In this study, exposure was approached through a combination of planned visits and emergent experiences over the course of about two months in the company of community workers in the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand (see figs. 1 & 2). The community workers incorporated into this study, totaling approximately 45, were associated with three NGOs dedicated to sustainable community development. These NGOs are each headquartered in Kumaon: Central Himalayan Environment Association (CHEA) in Nainital, Pan-Himalayan Grassroots Development Foundation (GRASSROOTS) in Ranikhet, and Society for Uttaranchal Development and Himalayan Action (SUDHA) in Almora. In addition to visiting each of their central offices, I traveled about 700 kilometers throughout Kumaon, visiting project sites, villages and communities, and locations with community importance as expressed by locals (e.g. Kausani, Bageshwar, Munsiyari, and Bhimtal among others). In addition to the community workers of the three NGOs, I had informal conversations about community work, NGOs, sustainable development, climate change, education, politics, gender, caste, and religion with approximately 125 to 150 people in Kumaon that helped me to make sense of how community work in the region is viewed.
Figure 1 India (in yellow with the state of Uttarakhand in red). [CC-by-sa PlaneMad/Wikimedia](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:India_with_Uttarakhand_highlighted.jpg).

Figure 2 Kumaon (in orange – the site of fieldwork for this study). Public Domain.
The data generated during fieldwork in Kumaon came from participant observation, semi-structured interviews, reviews of NGO websites and literature, and go-along interviews where locals guided me through their areas of work, livelihood, and homes. Questions to provoke conversation included the following:

- What is the work you do in the community?
- What do your friends and family think of the work you do?
- What is the biggest challenge you face in your work?
- What do you mean when you say development?
- How do you gain participation in your programming?
- Where do you do your work?
- What are you proud of in your work?
- Tell me about the communities you work in?
- How do villagers respond to you?
- What does backward mean to you?
- How do you come up with programs?
- Why do you do this work instead of something else?
- What would it take to overcome your biggest challenges?
- Are you hopeful for Kumaon?
- Is there anything else you want me to know about your work or Kumaon?
- I have heard _________ about Kumaon (etc.). Do you agree?
- What makes you happy in your work?

This is a partial list of the kinds of questions that came up in interviews and conversations with participants in this study. Rather than using the same questions each time, I made contextual choices on how best to provoke conversation on the themes of helping, development, community, work, challenges, successes, motivations, and so on. Because I did not initially know exactly what questions I hoped to answer, the Kumaoni CWs were
the ultimate source of the themes later presented. My inquiry-related commitment was to ongoing presence among community workers rather than to a set of questions. The process was animated by conversations and experiences that were at times planned out, at other times serendipitous. For instance, my plans with CHEA were established in general months before arriving and interviewing two individuals with that NGO was part of the plan from the beginning. Other members of that NGO as well as a number of go-along interviews were undertaken as the opportunities and new relationships presented themselves. SUDHA and GRASSROOTS were only planned on a matter of a few days notice. Subsequent time spent with each NGO and the CWs associated with them were organized in an organic manner, as researcher flexibility was key to facilitating time together. In the end, each NGO was selected under unique circumstances. CHEA was chosen by reputation, GRASSROOTS by professional networking in the U.S., and GRASSROOTS by proximity *in situ*.

As much as possible, I sought to understand and use the terms introduced by the NGOs’ literature and community workers, often saying something like, “you said the word ‘backward’, can you tell me what that means?” In the semi-formal interviews, I told participants that I might ask questions to which I thought I already knew the answer, but that I wanted to hear from them. I believe this had the effect of providing for the participants an alternative interpretation of my actions to, for instance, “he’s judging me” when I asked about the meaning of a term. That seemed to make sense to people, and they were forthcoming, even vulnerable at times, with their interpretations. As new terms, meanings, stories, examples, interpretations, and so on, were generated, I returned recursively to prior interpretations in order to make new sense. Although a process for
translation was created for Internal Review Board processes, it was not utilized, as translators were not used as anticipated (i.e. in formalized, official capacity). Rather, meanings were worked out among CWs dialogically in conversation and through follow-ups by utilizing member-checking processes.

Reflective Practice, Sense-Making, and Explanatory Coherence

Reflective practice refers to the in-the-moment and retrospective consideration of the data being generated and the ways in which it is being generated (Yanow, 2006, 2014). This central method in interpretive research is meant to delay “the premature closure that forecloses inquiry” (Yanow, 2006, p. 588). Reflective practice also attunes the inquirer to the “backtalk” one receives from the texts (in whatever form) so that a dialogical interaction continues to shape the researcher’s interpretation (Schön, 1983; Yanow, 2006). In addition, reflective practice in a hermeneutic interpretive design requires an ongoing “position reflexivity” and “epistemic reflexivity” (Yanow, 2006). Positional reflexivity asks the questions “who am I?” and “where am I?”, while epistemic reflexivity asks the question “how do answers to these first two questions shape my ways of knowing?” (Yanow, 2006, p. 586). Because this process is done over and again, Schwartz-Shea & Yanow (2012) describe the rhythm of interpretive research as iterative and recursive. Sense-making, then, in hermeneutic interpretive research design, involves an iterative and recursive reflective practice of interpretation, across texts mapped for exposure, and that is attentive to positionality and epistemology.

These processes were the foundation of my time in Kumaon. Inferences were made throughout the study, as I was the instrument of interpretation and data generation.
I daily reflected upon how my gender, cultural background, sexual orientation, political leanings, age, bodily ability, and education influenced the sense I made from the data generation. Many times, I made in-the-moment adjustments to my process based on this reflection while at other times it was days or weeks until I adjusted. For instance, when talking to community members, I soon realized that my status as an American seemed to open up a space of warmth and openness for the majority of Kumaoni people. Some people even seemed to want to offer a pleasing answer to my question that appeared only when my nationality (more than say, my status as an academic) entered the discussion. This meant sometimes attempting to conceal my nationality (I came to understand that people did not usually assume I was an American) until I had understood certain views, on say, international intervention in Kumaon. At other times, making my nationality known early kept people interested in me, often prompting a change in the participant’s demeanor. I have continued to consider how this and other positional and epistemic concerns influence my sense-making, including my avowal of certain identities. I will return to this subject in the final chapter, once I have introduced dialectic identity metaphors, in order to comment on the meaning structures I draw upon as a researcher.

A second realization and process adjustment in my study came when I decided travel was needed to a number of places where pre-arranged contacts or guides did not exist, so that I could understand the context of Kumaon in a slightly different way. In this way, reflective practice in the field caused me to reconsider my mapping for exposure (as discussed in the previous section). Relatedly, flexibility was important in relation to plans for exposure, often saying yes to ideas and plans made by Kumaoni community workers or community members that I may not have otherwise chosen to follow. Reflective
practice further illuminated for me the way particular voices were legitimized or undermined by subtle discourses from NGO leaders, causing reconsideration of how to interpret the meanings and messages of various participants. And, I noted the way I responded internally to information and experiences that challenged my worldview, reconsidering how to understand, for instance, community-based practices across cultural and economic contexts.

Reflective practice is an essential aspect of interpretive research analysis from the moment the inquiry is initially conceptualized until the moment the inquiry is closed. It is co-constitutive with interpretive sense-making, requiring data analysis even before the inquirer enters the field as well as after. This is in stark contrast to the step-wise, procedural processes that characterize positivist methods, whether quantitative or qualitative (Yanow, 2006). This difference has caused some confusion by positivist scholars who in turn view the lack of procedure as a lack of systematicity or rigor (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2006, 2012; Yanow, 2006). A central reason for this is that positivist “findings” are evaluated in part through an examination of the procedures used to arrive at inferences. If the steps are not followed or procedures change mid-study, the findings may be challenged or invalidated. Stepwise procedure is not the ultimate criterion for evaluating interpretive work. Instead, quality of interpretation is judged based on explanatory coherence and the systematic (not sequential) adherence to the norms of sense-making discussed above.

Explanatory coherence is the extent to which an argument or discussion holds together logically as an interpretation is communicated in final form. Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012) explain that when considering explanatory coherence, an interpretive
researcher “will point to (1) the consistency of evidence from different sources (the intertextuality of the analysis), (2) the ways in which conflicting interpretations have been engaged, and (3) the logic with which the argument has been developed” (p. 108-109). For this study, I will demonstrate intertextuality and the interpretive challenges and choices made during the sense-making process. To do so, a sampling of the surprises, tensions, and hermeneutic determinations that were co-generated with community workers and others in Kumaon will be offered. That process begins more fully in the next chapter. First, I want to surface a few reflections from my research process that influence my sense-making process.

**Final Notes on My Use of Language**

I would like to draw attention to a number of choices I have made in using language, writing, and citations that are related to the philosophical presuppositions of qualitative interpretive research. The first choice is in relation to quotations of texts and people. Many of the participants in this study spoke English as a non-primary language. The occasional grammatical error, like making a word plural that should not be and vice versa, appears quoted in the body of this work, without correction. I did this to preserve the linguistic structure of the information being interpreted. However, where another person may choose to demarcate these instances with ‘[sic]’ in order to communicate that it is not a typographical error, but a direct quote, I have chosen not to. The reason for this is I find it distracting, particularly for quotes with as many as three, four, and more instances where ‘[sic]’ would be used. It also tends to suggest to the reader that grammar is an important part of this sense-making project, and for me it is not. So rather than
clutter up the quotations, I am choosing to offer a general, preemptive [sic] to those
following appropriate instances.

The next choice made was to use modifiers that could confuse or mislead a person
coming from another set of philosophical presuppositions. Specifically, I utilize the
words ‘mild,’ ‘some,’ ‘many’, ‘most’, ‘often’, ‘typical’ and perhaps others that would
require operationalization in another epistemological setting. However, as used here,
these modifiers communicate my interpretive impressions as the instrument of inquiry.
Rather than clarifying interpretation in the quantifiable and verifiable ways that a
positivist might use them, these words clarify interpretation by offering some texture to
the sense-making that I am doing. If these modifiers provoke the reader to ask, “What
does he mean by ‘mild’?” then the modifiers have performed their function as ways to
draw the audience into the meaning-making process. For instance, if I say that an
encounter was a typical encounter, I am implicitly suggesting to the reader that it is my
interpretation that a pattern exists across encounters that the one I am now commenting
on is somehow representative of. ‘Typical’ should be understood in the interpretive
context of this study; and likewise, other modifiers that may signal various meanings to
various audiences. To frame it in the Hallsian terms of this work: I will be encoding my
meanings and messages using the meaning structures available to me in interpretive
research; the audience is invited to decode those meanings and messages by borrowing
those meaning structures to the best that they can.

Finally, because interpretive sense-making acknowledges that people are not
always aware of what meaning structures they draw upon when constructing and
communicating knowledge, I have made an additional choice regarding the attribution of
ideas to others. Namely, at the end of this work are both a ‘References’ section and an ‘Other Sources of Revelation’ section. The ‘References’ section will act as a works cited list where the works, texts, websites, and other materials that I cite in the text can be found. In addition, I will offer an ‘Other Sources of Revelation’ section that lists both works cited and additional works, texts, and other materials that have been influential in my meaning-making process but which are not necessarily directly cited in the body of work. This will hopefully offer a slightly broader picture of the meaning structures from which I draw in this communicative process.
Chapter 3

ABOUT COMMUNITY WORKERS IN KUMAON

In this chapter, I offer a glimpse into the data generated with CWs in Kumaon as pertains to their vocation as community workers. I have grouped the data using three general areas of stories told by CWs as well as my own observations of their behavior that emerged as I was in Kumaon and since. These three general areas are referred to as “story groups” as they combine to tell a story about a given topic area. Those story groups will be further analyzed in Chapter 4 in relation to identity construction, but here I offer interpretative accounts of the story groups in order to demonstrate the broad strokes of these emergent themes. They include stories of: backwardness and modernity; drudgery and happiness; and, corruption and honesty. To illustrate the character of these story groups, I will offer generalized stories as well as long and short quotes from interviews that I interpret as representative of the emergent themes.

Stories of Backwardness and Modernity

“What we are wrestling is how to get a middle ground, if at all it exists, enabling people to continue... you know, I’m not saying they must live like in the museum, they have to change, but how to adapt to all these... diverse challenges. And most of the time rural folks are not equipped to meet up with these challenges. You know, they may have gone to some schooling or some other education, but what is the level of that education? What is the quality of that education? Do they have the skill sets to actually become an urban citizen? Mostly they do not have. So we are churning, like misfits, in the thousands. So at the end of the day, what
happens – you are just building on... society’s frustration level. It’s just going up, year after year” – Kumaoni CW.

A group of stories around backwardness and modernity stood out to me as I traveled through Kumaon. Although both backwardness and modernity were spoken of in isolation from one another, they were often juxtaposed within a conversation. Many times, as the quote above partially illustrates, the tension felt by CWs over providing what they feel are necessary projects, programs, and interventions while protecting a sense of tradition, was directly articulated. In this case, the CW above uses the word “wrestling” and expresses some skepticism about a middle ground between protecting tradition in rural Kumaon and advocating for change.

The label “backward” is written into the Indian constitution and plays a significant role in national political discourse (Jaffrelot, 2000; Jain & Ratnam, 1994; Mariah, 1992). The state of Uttarakhand, in which Kumaon is located, was formed in part due to agitation by upper-caste members against government reservations for the backward classes in government jobs and political offices (Mawdsley, 1997). The language of backwardness is no longer considered politically correct in the US, although one may occasionally hear it in private settings. For an American in India, it can be surprising to hear and read it used with regularity in official and public discourse. When I asked the Kumaoni participants about the use of the word, they tended to shrug it off, not seeing why I would ask about the term unless I offered some context. To be backward, in CW discourse, was not limited to specific legal definitions, but simply to be identified by one’s status in one or more group of the following in Kumaon: a farmer or pastoralist, an
artisan, a village woman, a member of the lower castes, a member of higher castes working as a farmer or pastoralist, or any other poor person.

Important to this discourse was also the topic of reservations in Indian society. Reservations are the quotas, regulations, and systematic preferences for the backward classes. The constitution comments not only on lower caste membership, but also “other backward classes”, an ambiguous term of great intellectual and legal debate (see e.g., Jaffrelot, 2000; Jain & Ratnam, 1994; Ramaiah, 1992). The view that reservations are no longer needed for the backward classes was communicated to me by numerous community workers in Kumaon, all of who happened to also be members of the high castes. The story I heard from many community workers was that while inequalities did exist in India at one time, at this point, society is basically equal and therefore reservations are an outdated tool. At the same time, these community workers referred to villagers (often regardless of caste membership) as backward people stuck in old ways or with inadequate knowledge or education. For instance, there was a prevalent view that the Indian government’s movement to decentralize power through forest councils (van panchayats) and village councils (gram panchayats) was not accompanied by sufficient training or education for villagers. Thus, CWs sometimes saw themselves as filling a giant void between egalitarian ideals they say were embodied in decentralization efforts and the practical considerations related to the perceived fact that the backward classes did not possess the capacity to self-govern.

“Sometime in the 80s, they decided (the magistrate system) was too focused and driven by officials, and the people at large, the community at large, should be empowered further than where they had reached between ‘47 and 1980s. So whether we agree or not, the government made a
constitutional amendment, and they said that we are going to create this new act, its called the panchayati raj [village rule] act... And so they devolved powers, administrative as well as financial, from the magistrate... to the villages, to the panchayats. Ok, now theoretically its fascinating to do that, ok, but practically to transfer powers and systems of governance... from people who were trained over something like 20, 25 years at schooling and university and special training in administrative staff colleges, you know, and a history of, the legacy of that training, and that experience, and to replace it with an act which empowers and enables people with complete administrative and financial powers is a phenomenal decision to take for a young democracy like India, a modern democracy like India. But it required, we feel, then, as well as now, a huge capacity-building program. Where you actually empower people truly in systems of governance, which they have never experienced. That was never done and it’s still not been done” – Kumaoni CW.

So while many community workers did not see the need for reservations, they did see a need for modernization of the backward classes. Thus, CHEA, GRASSROOTS, and SUDHA all practiced various forms of technology transfer through the introduction of new tools, techniques, information technologies, and modes of healthcare. One example of this is the installation of biogas systems in village homes. In order to reduce the inhalation of cooking smoke by women in village homes, community workers have installed biogas systems that convert animal waste into gas usable in kitchen stoves rather than the firewood that must be gathered, which is nearly exclusively used in Kumaoni village homes. Further examples can be found in the introduction of cell phones so that farmers can track market prices and weather, or provision by NGOs of new tools for
cutting bamboo for use in handicrafts. In these ways, stories of backwardness and modernity are a part of everyday meaning making in Kumaon.

According to the CWs, ignorance was to blame for much of the backwardness of villagers. Whether due to isolation in rural Himalayan valleys, poor public education, lack of opportunity for sharing best practices, or systematic marginalization through neo-liberal capitalism and globalization, the problems facing villagers in Kumaon were generally thought to be partially related to ignorance of superior technologies, techniques, or tools. Constructing the challenges of villagers in such a way further suggested that education was the key to changing villager circumstances. Thus, CWs see exposure visits and facilitation of self-help groups as providing a kind of infrastructural and educational investment that the government and market have failed to produce.

To be clear, the word ignorance is used, not in a derogatory sense or as a character flaw, but in the sense that one is rather innocently unaware of some piece of information. CWs do not seem to look down spitefully upon villagers. The ignorance CWs describe is not attributed to chosen foolishness or a lack of curiosity or desire to learn on the part of villagers. Rather, CWs see significant barriers to education and knowledge sharing for villagers. These include: a lack of time for networking or sharing best practices; a lack of investment by government and private actors in developing infrastructure in the Himalaya; a lack of quality affordable education in Kumaon; and, the geographic and climatic challenges associated with mountain living.

A significant number of programs across the three NGOs relied on the introduction of a previously-unknown-to-the-villagers tool, technique, or best practice. An exposure visit is one of the main educational and persuasive techniques that
community workers in Kumaon utilize. A typical story of ignorance transformed through exposure would describe how a handful of villagers were brought by community workers to a nearby (sometimes distant) village where a program or intervention had previously been done. The villagers, perhaps skeptical of a new technology or technique being advocated by the NGO, would see the project in person and meet the villagers with whom the community workers already partnered. This, according to many CW stories, was the turning point in a given village as the exposure provoked adoption by not only those who visited, but others in the village who trusted their fellow community members’ reporting more than they would have trusted the rhetoric of the CWs.

Community workers described the process of village level transformation in this manner in participatory terms. The sequence would go something like this:

- CWs visit villages and learn about the specific struggles that need addressing.
- CWs develop intervention or program and seek funding.
- CWs introduce pilot project in original village to show proof of concept.
- The pilot project village offers feedback to CWs in order to refine the concepts.
- Villagers from other locations are brought on exposure visits to the original site.
- CWs use exposure visits as catalysts for launching scaled-up programs.
- CWs set up self-help groups to lead stewardship of long-term projects.

Because villagers identify the initial problem, and the villagers host exposure visits and participate in pilot projects, community workers see the process as a collaborative and participatory endeavor. The possession of knowledge is split between villagers, who know what the problems are, and community workers, who know what the solutions are. Although there are feedback opportunities, once the community has identified the problems to the CWs, the remaining participation for villagers seems to be
limited to learning. In this way, knowledge-holding community workers develop plans and implement interventions to address the ignorance of villagers and the problems associated with that ignorance.

*Stories of Drudgery and Happiness*

“What is worrying for us, after spending almost 35, 40 years in rural areas, that [ability to self-sustain] is getting threatened now. You know, because of the economics. It’s so badly stacked against the farmer, in our country at least, in terms of fetching remunerative prices. And along side: modern education, half-baked and new aspirations; and so there’s a huge out-migration, which is getting thrust on the rural communities. And then they leave this [agrarian lifestyle], which they are doing for generations, and they leave this peaceful existence and get into the urban ghettos where there is really nothing wholesome waiting for them. And we are letting this happen. You know, there is no... except for all these little, you know, bits of work, of all the organizations you are going to be visiting. That’s all a, you know, reaction to what I’m saying. Each one of us are trying their best to revolve around communities and get them to, you know, get their energies together to not fall victim to that situation. And that is the biggest challenge we feel in community development. Knowing that the situation is so dynamic, you know?” – Kumaoni CW.

No other single word grabbed my attention before or during my fieldwork the way drudgery did. Similarly to ‘backward’, it is not used in my everyday context, barely registering in my vocabulary usage. So when I first encountered it, I thought it an unusual turn of phrase as it referred to the harsh conditions experienced, particularly by women, while living in the Himalaya. But I began to pay it closer attention as it showed up in the
literature and daily conversations of CHEA, GRASSROOTS, and SUDHA community workers. “The drudgery of women” is the way the term is most often used, as a kind of catch all that illustrates the way women bear the brunt of harsh mountain life. For example, in the 33rd Annual Report from CHEA (2015), the Executive Director writes of CHEA’s work, “the management of spring sanctuaries, sustainable use of biodiversity, interventions for fodder development, and the reduction of the drudgery of women are some of the principal programmes” (p. 6).

The drudgery to which community workers in Kumaon are referring is apparent to anyone who travels in the villages. The steep mountains and valleys of the Himalaya mean that almost any travel in the region is characterized by significant elevation gain and loss. As most villagers are at least partially reliant on the forests and rivers for their livelihoods, travel is a daily occurrence in order to collect fodder for animals, water for cooking and growing, firewood for kitchen use, and other items for various needs. Women typically do this work, nearly exclusively. It is common to see women traversing steep trails with many dozens of pounds of grass, firewood, or water strapped to their bodies. The intense sun shining down on the women through thin mountain atmosphere is traded for torrential downpours and landslides during the monsoon months, making travel difficult and exhausting no matter the season. Animal-human conflicts in the fields and homes are common as women and villagers in general deal with wild pigs, monkeys, and leopards that ruin crops and attack the occasional farmer or pastoralist. It does not take long for a visitor to the villages to recognize that the challenges of mountain life deserve a special designation, one that community workers’ interpretation of “drudgery” seems to provide.
This drudgery also manifests as social pressure to participate in corrupt practices.

Take this story told by two Kumaoni CWs:

CW1: “We were working in a horticulture development project, there was a government person whom we had taken as our team leader. So he was performing his regular job as, uh, in charge of horticulture mobile team and also a team leader within our project. So he looked at our functioning, we motivated him, we said that this is an opportunity; you can bring wellbeing to the society etcetera, etcetera. So I was observing him, he was doing all kinds of corruption within his regular business kind of thing. Like, if he’s distributing seed, out of 1 KG seed he is taking 100 grams, in a kitty. And I asked why you are just weighing 900 grams. He said at times, officers want seed, the political representative wants seed, so where from I will get? So I am deducting 100 grams. But here when he was working on the project, he was totally transparent, and he started enjoying that honesty...”

CW2: “As a cause...”

CW1: “as a cause.”

CW2: “He took it as a cause.”

CW1: “And then today, you will be surprised to know sir, that project was for five years, and today he is, uh, established trainer within the horticulture department. So what I’m trying to say, that these facilitators, even to provide medical health to the inaccessible areas, enterprise development, livelihood development; unless until this kind of role, like say for X organization, he should have some kind of fear of losing his services [government job]. When you enter into a government job, you enter at 21 and you are out at 60, or whatever age you retire. So nowhere in, globally, government servants are as secure as in India. And that leads for corruption. That leads for all kind of thing.”
Here, the CWs illustrate the challenge of becoming or remaining free from the burdens of corruption for community members in Kumaon. Their view was that for a villager who starts out honest, and is able to find some escape from the drudgery of agricultural work, the burden of a corrupt system is immediately met. That is, the weight of a broken economic and governance system is felt by nearly all in rural Kumaon. There is a sense of inescapability from the drudgery of mountain life.

This is contrasted with the way community workers describe their own work. Nearly all of the approximately 45 community workers that I met came originally from rural Kumaon and therefore had an intimate knowledge of the drudgery that they said characterized village life in the Himalaya. It was this intimacy that was often cited as the reason that although their education could likely have allowed them to take more lucrative work in the cities of India, kept them dedicated to helping the villages. Community workers in Kumaon consistently described their work as giving them great satisfaction and happiness, something they never said about the daily work of Kumaoni villagers. When asked about their choice to stay and work in their communities, many had stories of short-lived experiences in the financial sector or working for the government, but left in search of “job satisfaction” and a sense of meaning and vocation. Community work seemed to provide this sense of purpose and fulfillment, a sense they did not ascribe to the life of villagers.

A related story from CWs was the transformation of villagers’ confidence, also partially illustrated in the above quote. Community workers from all around Kumaon relayed tales of growing confidence by women and backward class members as part of the community. Many CWs talked about how happy it made them to see women, for
instance, who were shy and deferential in the beginning of a program, transform into confident, vocal leaders who took ownership and claimed newfound respect from other villagers. Interestingly, many told similar stories about their own journeys as CWs, unsure of themselves in the beginning, but gaining a sense of confidence in their vocation. CW stories of gaining confidence were intertwined with self-descriptions of happiness on the part of themselves, and the reduction of drudgery on the part of villagers. It is a fair interpretation to suggest that part of the dialectic movement that emerged through stories of drudgery and happiness traveled along a narrative path of increasing or decreasing self-confidence.

Stories of Corruption and Honesty

“We have reached a point, democratically, where we have one-third of... our rulers are known to be criminals. So from that point of view (another CW) may have felt that the trust in democratic systems is declining. And I would agree with it. I mean there is enough evidence now, that why people may feel that this system is not delivering what theoretically it ought to be delivering. I mean how did we create this system where so many criminals would get into that position?” – Kumaoni CW.

Talking to community members in Kumaon, I began to see a pattern of responses to the disclosure that I was in India in order to understand the work being done by NGOs. This was commonly how I answered the question “Why are you in India?” when asked by community members as it was a useful, simple way to communicate truthfully without making the explanation unnecessarily complex. The pattern I saw was that community members who were not immediately affiliated with an NGO as a volunteer, employee, or
program participant tended to take a skeptical view of NGOs. It was common for people to have a cautious, somewhat quizzical look on their face once I told them. I began to ask what they thought about NGOs in their community. I would often here vague stories about an “uncle” (not necessarily the brother of their mother or father, could also be a cousin or distant relative) who runs an NGO only to get money from the government or foreign aid agencies that mostly, if not entirely, goes to his own comfort. The stories were rarely first-hand accounts, although I did hear those too. Often it was something like, “I know of a guy in my cousin’s village who started an NGO and now he is rich”.

This complaint came also from many community workers at CHEA, GRASSROOTS, and SUDHA. Continuing from a discussion of decentralization:

“So practically what happened was that all that administrative power and the financial power moved out of the district headquarters straight to the 600,000 villages. And it became a free-for-all. And therefore, in the last 20 years of the panchayati raj, two things have definitely happened. One is that it has made everyone corrupt, because there was no system of governance. The money was just being allocated and villages panchayats were misusing it as much as possible, ok. At the same time, when you allow this to happen, it generates and breeds criminal tendencies in society. I mean, financial corruption leads to social problems – it’s known all over the world. It’s not rocket science to understand that it’s [not] just limited to financial corruption, that you know, you as the panchayat leader have just usurped some amount of money and kept it for yourself and that’s about it. You know, it doesn’t end there, because then you start playing that game. The new game with the new money, which you have, unaccounted for, in different directions. And that starts a whole new ballgame. And that is what happened over here” – Kumaoni CW.
Every community worker who spoke on the subject was of the view that corruption was rampant in the national and local government. The consequence, they said, was that NGOs were registered only to receive government money or foreign aid and not for any real work. The NGO “managers” and whatever government officials helped to funnel that funding to the group then shared the money. For this reason, community workers and community members alike tended to view NGOs with some suspicion, assuming corruption until they were convinced of the NGO’s honesty.

Community workers at CHEA, GRASSROOTS, and SUDHA adopted various strategies to address this perception. For instance, CHEA’s leadership went so far as to refuse to work with government funding, despite their need for resources. For them, it was a matter of pride that they could demonstrate fiscal transparency and missional honesty. They subjected themselves to independent audits on a regular basis, and preferred to work with private corporations like the Tata Trust precisely because Tata requires high levels of transparency and accountability.

Furthermore, they report taking a relational approach to their work that builds a sense of trust among villagers:

“Not only we are implementing the proposal, but we are developing a relationship with the people. That we are not only going for the project work. If there is a marriage in the village then we participate. If there is a casualty or something like that, we are there. So there is a feeling of a family. So that is the thing and that’s why the people come forward”
– Kumaoni CW.

Likewise, community workers at GRASSROOTS reported efforts to demonstrate transparency and build long-term relationships. Using cooperatives, self-help groups, and
collective decision making processes with community members, they hoped to earn trust with communities and demonstrate an honest posture. This was a collective endeavor that Kumaoni CWs often said was a long and challenging process:

“The fact is sustaining ecology is a way of life. It is not something you do today and not do tomorrow. Which means you have to have a very long-term engagement of communities in this whole activity. And it has to be passed on from generation to generation. Now if that is the scenario, then it is a tough one” – Kumaoni CW.

I did meet community members who worked with NGOs not a part of this study but of the kind described by locals as potentially untrustworthy. The difficulty of interpreting non-study-participating NGOs’ involvement in corruption is perhaps obvious, and was not something I set out to do. This is one area where cultural differences contributed to my inability to ascribe corruption to a person or group in the non-study-participating NGOs. Language and cultural barriers, lack of norms for transparency, and unfamiliarity with the details of a given NGO (outside the three examined here) meant that it was beyond the scope of this inquiry to identify any NGOs as “corrupt”. It was apparent, however, that the regulatory capability of the government on NGO behavior was made problematic by the inaccessibility of many NGO leaders (contact information is often unreliable and communication and travel in Kumaon is slow and tedious). Self-regulation or chosen accountability are currently the only significant ways in which corruption is minimized in Kumaon. Nonetheless, as the examples above show, there are community workers and NGOs choosing accountability and self-regulation in ways that are transparent and apparently trustworthy.
Even so, there is a clear sense of fear about the direction of society due to the effects of corruption. So much is at stake materially on the outcome of elections at all levels that a divisive, and increasingly polarizing brand of partisan politics is even reaching the village level in some cases:

“The big problem is that all the local elections have got linked to political parties, the elections at village levels. The bottom of the so-called democratic hierarchy. You can’t do that. You can’t bring political parties into the village life. And its got disrupted so badly... The last two years, this last election that has happened, has ruptured the social fabric to the extent that the villages... If I have won, and I am from village A, I’m breaking my relationships with village B, which is part of one gram panchayat [local level council], to the extent that the exchange in social functions of regular life – you have these ceremonies for birth and all that has been disrupted. Which we were fearing for the past 3, 4 years. This time a number of people have walked up to say that, you know, we have stopped inviting so-and-so village and so-and-so village and so-and-so village. And it’s going undocumented. It’s true that the devolution of power leads to empowerment and so on – yes. All that does happen, you cannot deny that. But I think there are ways and time periods over which these devolutions of powers should happen. Devolutions of powers with complete... with large sums of money, without any training, at any level, only leads to corruption. And it leads to other problems” – Kumaoni CW.

*The Interaction of Stories and Identity*

These three story groups are revelatory of the thinking that goes on among CWs in Kumaon. As mentioned before, these groups emerged as themes during the fieldwork portion of this study. Since then, the dialectic nature of these themes has become clearer
while reviewing notes and listening to interviews. That is to say, these story groups are each characterized by an internal conversation with co-constitutive, competing, and complimenting elements. That process, which I describe as dialectic, characterizes interpersonal and intrapersonal negotiation of identity shaped by and shaping the social context in which it occurs. The next chapter examines these dialectic relationships and offers an interpretation of their interactive properties and the social manifestations of which they are co-constitutive.
Chapter 4

ABOUT IDENTITY

Identities can be avowed and ascribed (Stewart, Zediker, & Witteborn, 2009). That is, a person may avow an identity, thus claiming it. Additionally, a person may have an identity ascribed to them, regardless of whether the person avows that identity. For instance, one may avow an identity as a professional while another person ascribes to that same person an identity as an amateur. These identities may be negotiated or contested by both the person in question and others who agree or disagree. Thus one may disavow the identity of amateur that another person ascribes to her. In this way, her identity is a contested process of avowal and disavowal as well as ascription (Stewart et al., 2009).

The process of identity construction is therefore characterized by dynamic instances of avowal/disavowal and ascription. This negotiation is always a social process, often with political and power implications. A community is constructed when norms and a code for conduct are added to a sense of identity shared among individuals (Bhattacharyya, 2004).

In this chapter, I will briefly review two major streams of thought on identity formation as a point of departure for the discussion of identity construction among community workers in Kumaon. Then, I will discuss three areas of dialectic identity metaphors that emerged from the story groups discussed in Chapter 3. Throughout, I will further explicate my sense-making process and connect dialectic identity metaphors to the concept of meaning structures (Hall, 1973/2006) as introduced in Chapter 2. Finally, I will link the construction of shared identity to the collective action undertaken by Kumaoni CWs in the form of projects, programs, and interventions.
Two Streams of Identity Study

The study of identity is traced in the Western academic tradition to insights from Cooley (1902) and Mead (1934) that reflected on the notion of self and how it is constructed (Cerulo, 1997; Owens, Robinson, & Smith-Lovin, 2010). From the beginning, focus was placed on the individual’s sense of self and how it is constructed and maintained, with an emphasis on microsociological perspectives such as social psychology and symbolic interactionism (Cerulo, 1997). Mead said that self was “born out of reflective action, stemming primarily from a person’s interactions with others” (Owens et al, 2010, p. 478). Mead argued that the self consists of two components, which he labeled the “I” and the “me”. In Mead’s conceptualization, the “I” is the subject who acts and knows. The “me” is all the learned perspectives and attitudes the “I” has toward one’s own person (Owens et al, 2010). In this conceptualization, the “I” is the self within which the “me”, or self-concept, is nested. This notion supports a concept of self that understands an internalized, stable identity. Two major theories were developed in the 1960s that sought to explain how identity comes to be internalized and remain stable: Role-Identity Theory and Identity Theory.

McCall and Simmons introduced Role-Identity Theory in 1966. The theory defined role-identity as “the character that individuals devise for themselves when occupying specific social settings” (Owens et al, 2010). McCall and Simmons theorized that people creatively improvise in their role performance, but remain restricted by the requirements and constraints of their various social locations. Since people have multiple role-identities, a person must develop a hierarchy of role-identities determined by the prominence of a given role-identity. Prominence is predicated on commitment, a view of
their ideal selves, how others appraise that role-identity, and what rewards previous role performances have elicited (Owens et al, 2010).

Stryker’s Identity Theory, introduced in 1968, has experienced a place of privilege in structural symbolic interactionism (Owens et al, 2010). “Identity Theory sees a multifaceted self composed of multiple identities arranged hierarchically in an identity salience structure” (Owens et al, 2010, p. 482). Two dimensions of commitment to the identity determine its salience. Interactional commitment relates to the extent to which an identity is known in one’s social network while Affective commitment relates to the emotional investment one has in an identity (Owens et al, 2010). Much work has been built on these two theoretical foundations in social psychology and microsociology. Thoits’s (1983) Identity Accumulation Theory and Burke’s (1991) Identity Control Theory are two examples (Owens et al, 2010).

From the time of Mead forward through the 1970s, sociology was dominated by studies of the individual and the way a person developed a sense of self (Cerulo, 1997). However, social and nationalist movements in the 70s, 80s, and 90s drew the attention of sociologists to issues of group agency and political action (Cerulo, 1997). As these issues combined with changes in technology that challenged traditional notions of community and group formation, identity scholarship took on an increasingly collective lens that built on the works of Durkheim, Marx, Weber, and Tönnies (Cerulo, 1997). Scholars in this area rejected the essentialist and rigidly categorical qualities to which many microsociological identities were attributed such as “physiological traits, psychological predispositions, regional features, or the properties of structural locations” (Cerulo, 1997, p. 386-387). The central objection was that these theories believed that group members
“internalize these qualities, suggesting a unified, singular social experience, a single canvas against which social actors constructed a sense of self” (Cerulo, 1997, p. 387).

These anti-essentialist views took on a social constructionist approach to identity, understanding a collective as “an entity molded, refabricated, and mobilized in accord with reigning cultural scripts and centers of power” (Cerulo, 1997, p. 387). Areas of inquiry such as gender identity, gender-sex link, sexual identity, race and ethnicity, national identity, and various political and collective action groups utilize a constructionist approach. The establishment of distinguishing boundaries by collectives is closely related to the knowledge theories of Bourdieu, Derrida, Foucault, and others (Cerulo, 1997). Social constructivism tries to refocus the exploration of identity from the individual back to the collective. These areas of study often examine discourse rather than scrutinize behavior and “approach identity as a source of mobilization rather than a product of it” (Cerulo, 1997, p. 400). Attempts to synthesize the micro-macro divide is evident in the work of Bourdieu, Giddens, and Habermas and calls for softening the borders have come from both collective identity scholars and social psychologists (Cerulo, 1997; Owens et al, 2010).

Identity as Dialectic Relationships

The negotiated construction of identity can be thought of as a series of dialectic relationships. That is, the process is a dynamic back and forth between what a person avows as his identity and what others ascribe as his identity (Stewart et al, 2009). When we wish to know how others see a person, we are focusing on ascribed identity. When we wish to know how a person sees himself or herself, we are focusing on avowed identity.
In this study, I am interested in how community workers see themselves, and therefore focus on identity avowal and its negative form, disavowal.

This dynamic of disavowal/avowal is also dialectic in nature. One’s identity is negotiated and constructed through an iterative, recursive discourse with the world. It is a process of socially and individually declaring, “I avow this identity” and “I disavow that identity”. But, these avowals and disavowals, being iterative, are not always permanent or decisive. One negotiates even with one’s self to construct an identity such that I may avow an identity today that I will disavow tomorrow. The internal and external wrestling between identities is an important process in the life of communities as it affects the way information is processed and interpreted. It is another layer of the double hermeneutic, interpretations of interpretations (Giddens, 1986), which characterizes one’s knowing.

To the extent that we can understand how identity is being negotiated in the context of community work, we can potentially gain insight into the way information is interpreted and practical theory is implemented by CWs. The following sections attempt to demonstrate the insights that can be gained by examining the story groups that emerged from the process of data generation in Kumaon. Specifically, by analyzing the stories told by community workers about themselves, their work, and the people they work with, we can understand the identity CWs are constructing. Thus, I will offer analysis of the three story groups that I noted in the last chapter: stories about backwardness and modernity; drudgery and happiness; and, corruption and honesty. I will demonstrate how these story groups contain what I call dialectic identity metaphors that help CWs make sense of the world and move to collective action in response, through shared identity.
In the previous chapter I described the way in which many stories told by CWs in Kumaon grouped around themes of backwardness and modernity. Recall that to be backward was to be a member of one or more group of the following in Kumaon: a farmer or pastoralist, an artisan, a village woman, a member of the lower castes, a member of higher castes working as a farmer or pastoralist, or any other poor person. CWs tended to be middle class, upper caste former villagers who had left the rural areas to attend university and were now helping the kinds of communities from which they came. For many, a sort of personal journey from the context of backwardness (even if not personally considered backward) to a perceived modern lifestyle was one they hoped to make possible for friends, family, and community members of Kumaon. As one CW put it when describing he and his fellow CWs in a Kumaoni NGO, “We are from villages.” He said this to indicate both a familiarity with the places where he worked, but also with a hint of past-tense understanding. It was almost as if he was describing a passage from backwardness to modernity. He was still related to the village and it was a part of who he was and his story. And yet, there was a marked difference between his self-description and the way he described villagers with whom he worked.

The unspoken but rather obvious implication of the description of backward classes and their need to modernize is that the CWs were not, or were no longer, backward. Indeed, they seemed to see themselves as the very bearers of modernity to the backward classes of Kumaon. The process of constructing an identity as a community worker seemed to rest in part on a disavowal of backwardness, and by extension, an avowal of modernity. During my fieldwork, I never met a person who described herself
as both backward and a CW. In the context of the backward/modern dialectic story group
CWs communicated the various ways in which backwardness was a problem that others
faced; and, that they intended to help those who were backward.

This dynamic of disavowing backwardness and avowing modernity emerged
across multiple instances, at times constituting only a passing phrase or characterization
and at other times came in the form of long soliloquys. Reading across these instances led
me to believe that an important process of identity construction was undertaken in
discourses about backwardness and modernity. I have come to describe this process as
the backward/modern dialectic identity metaphor. Through the telling and retelling of
stories, whether complex or simple, a CW constructs an important image of herself as one
who is not backward, but modern.

This is of consequence because information about the way the world works (or
does not work) is filtered through this identity construct, which understands the world in
part through a backward/modern dialectic. This identity construct becomes an important
meaning structure, which is drawn upon by the Kumaoni CW when she encodes and
decodes information or events. Recall from Chapter 2 that meaning structures are the
socio-cultural, economic, and political structures from which we draw pre-coded
information in order to interpret the information or events we experience. I am suggesting
that dialectic identity metaphors (DIMs) are precisely this sort of meaning structure. In
this case, the CW’s knowledge of the way the world is, and by extension how the world
may be made into something else, is constructed in part by calling upon metaphors of
backwardness and modernity. And, because she recognizes backwardness as another’s
problem, modernity as its dialectic partner, and herself as an example of modernity, she
will construct an intervention (in part) based in her own image. In other words, it is her experience of modernity that will come to partially characterize any program, project, and intervention that she helps to shape.

I say partially because the community worker does not draw on only one dialectic identity metaphor, let alone one meaning structure. Other dialectic identity metaphors are in negotiation with the backward/modern DIM and co-construct her avowed and disavowed identity.

*The Drudgery/Happiness Dialectic Identity Metaphor*

Stories of drudgery and happiness also contributed to the dialectic process of CW identity construction. Through the telling and retelling of stories that disavow drudgery and avow happiness, CWs further negotiate their identities and make sense of their worlds. The retelling by CWs of stories of drudgery not only communicates messages and meanings regarding the circumstances of villagers, but also serves as a foundation for comparison when describing the happiness CWs avow. As stated in Chapter 3, happiness is something CWs tend to attribute to themselves, but rarely attribute to villagers. One CW put it rather succinctly when discussing the lived experience of villagers in Kumaon: “The people are not happy.” Drudgery, unhappiness, suffering, impoverishment, difficulty – these characterized the stories CWs usually told to describe village life in the mountains. Stories of satisfaction, happiness, confidence, contentedness, and hope were the stories CWs told to describe themselves.

Here, the stories further served to explain the general strategy used by avowed modern, happy CWs to address the disavowed drudgery and backwardness of village life.
As described in Chapter 3, CWs used exposure visits and educational programs to move villagers from ignorance to knowledge. In addition, CWs created programs and opportunities for the introduction of tools, techniques, or best practices that were previously unknown to the villagers. All three NGOs in this study utilized experts in various crafts and employed specialists with knowledge of subjects such as ecology, botany, business, and agriculture. CWs not only facilitated the exposure visits and educational opportunities, but they were very often the holders of the knowledge to be delivered to villagers. Through the ownership of these projects and programs and their association with the sources of knowledge, CWs disavowed ignorance as partially constitutive of drudgery. The material correlation of knowledge with happiness was thus strongly and repeatedly implied.

A sort of moral imperative is constructed through the dialectic interaction of drudgery and happiness. CWs’ avowal of happiness and disavowal of drudgery is confronted by a second avowal summarized above by the quote of one CW: “We are from villages.” Despite the distinction between identity construction of CWs and villagers, elements of shared identity such as being “from villages” mean that some sense of community or solidarity exists between CWs and villagers. There is a sense of responsibility that is articulated by CWs toward villagers who experience drudgery. There is a sense among CWs of a moral failure signaled by inequitable distribution of the material causes of drudgery and happiness. While the individual strategies, sense of urgency, and motivations vary among CWs, the desire to lift the burden of drudgery accompanies their avowal of happiness. Thus, the drudgery/happiness DIM offers a significant source of meanings and messages with which CWs make sense of the world.
Analysis of the drudgery/happiness DIM provides additional insight into the construction of CW identities in Kumaon and the co-constitutive programs, projects and interventions of their parent NGOs. Because CWs avow being knowledgeable as part of their identity while attributing at least some backwardness and drudgery to villager ignorance, taking the role of teacher, expert, or facilitator is often central to their work. To be clear, this juxtaposition of ignorance and knowledge seemed to me to be mild in its expression. By that I mean that the language used and the posture taken by CWs is not one of open condescension or hostile judgment. Indeed, the language and posture that I witnessed was generally gentle, empathetic, and carefully constructed in order to protect the dignity of the villagers. It would be unfair to characterize CWs in Kumaon as merely elitist in their disposition. Still, there is an unmistakable division between the helpers and the helped. Illustrated in this dialectic identity metaphor is the difficulty of adopting a vocation of helping that is completely irreproachable from the perspective of mutuality and equity. Indeed, the idea that a ‘helper-helped’ relationship can escape any charge of condescension may be conceptually impossible. At any rate, the ‘helper-helped’ dynamic deserves further analysis and I will return to this discussion in a later chapter.

*The Corruption/Honesty Dialectic Identity Metaphor*

The third group of stories that CWs told gathers around the theme of corruption and honesty. One of the strongest iterations of CW disavowal/avowal folds along the line of corruption and honesty. That is, the community workers in Kumaon that participated in this study strongly disavow corruption and avow honesty. Two areas of practice are particularly co-constitutive with this DIM: transparency and participation. Stories of
transparency were often used to illustrate the avowed difference that CWs felt between their practices and those of NGOs they considered corrupt. For example, I was often told in detail, without explicit provocation, of the extent to which a given CW’s parent nongovernmental organization went in order to demonstrate fiscal accountability of the highest order. Similarly, stories of public participation were used in part to demonstrate trustworthiness on the part of the CW’s parent NGO, again, without inquisition. I took this as an indication of strong personal concern with the organizational reputation of these particular CWs in Kumaon. It was personally important to them that their work be both honest and understood as honest.

Transparency and participation are also characteristic of the kind of relationship CWs reported having with villagers. For instance, the relationship that villagers seem to have with corrupt officials is characterized by a transactional nature. That is, rather than a social-emotional relationship that was built on a sense of solidarity, villagers often reported (both through CWs and directly to myself) an economic-transactional relation where no sense of solidarity was constructed. This contrasts with CWs’ stories of attending weddings, funerals, and various other ceremonies and community functions – a relationship described as “family-like” by numerous CWs. This warmth was evident in the many CW-villager interactions I witnessed across Kumaon. Furthermore, whereas the functions and goings-on of everyday life in Kumaon necessitate some interaction with government officials, villagers exercised greater agency in their choice to accept the presence of CWs in their communities. The reality of this circumstance, along with my personal observations of villager-CW interactions, led me to conclude that what CWs’ report regarding a family-like relationship with villagers is likely not an exaggeration, but
indeed a common experience throughout the villager relations associated with CHEA, GRASSROOTS, and SUDHA.

Like the previous dialectic identity metaphors discussed in this chapter, the corruption/honesty DIM offers further complexity to CW identity construction in Kumaon. Implied in this DIM is a second moral imperative, playing a similar role as the drudgery/happiness DIM. Whereas the dialectic interaction of drudgery and happiness combine with CWs’ sense of solidarity with villagers, leading to a sense of moral responsibility to reduce villager drudgery and increase villager happiness; the corruption/honesty DIM contributes to the construction of codes for conduct and norms to which CWs in this study felt strong allegiance. On a number of occasions that were clearly *not* staged, I witnessed examples of CWs practicing transparency or actions of participatory accountability with villagers. The moral imperative of honesty in CW dealings, together with the moral imperative to lessen drudgery and increase happiness, help further define the avowed identity of CWs. Furthermore, these moral imperatives, derived from corruption/honesty and drudgery/happiness DIM, are co-constitutive with backward/modern DIM. Together, these dialectic identity metaphors contribute to the way CWs in Kumaon make sense of the world, find purpose and direction in that world, and construct a sense of shared identity, codes for conduct, and norms for life together.

*Three Dialectic Identity Metaphors as Shared Identity*

The three dialectic identity metaphors (backward/modern, drudgery/happiness, and corruption/honesty) discussed in this chapter do not constitute the entirety of identity being constructed by an individual Kumaoni community worker. Rather, these three
represent an area of overlap for the CWs who participated in this study. Co-constitutive with these three DIMs are other sources of meaning unique to each individual CW, but that each CW shares with others in their individual lives (e.g., family, friends, religious groups, political groups, economic structures, and many more). Accounting for all the meaning structures from which each individual CW draws to make sense of the world and construct his or her identity is a massive undertaking. What is demonstrated here is that some shared identities can be observed among Kumaoni CWs by “reading across” the stories they tell regarding their work with villagers. Furthermore, rather than formal academic theories of community work practice, it is a shared set of dialectic identity metaphors that provide the meaning structures out of which CWs collectively build projects, programs, and interventions. In the next chapter, I offer a deeper analysis of the ways in which dialectical identity metaphors inform meaning-making and collective action.
Chapter 5
ABOUT DIALECTIC IDENTITY METAPHORS

Understanding dialectic identity metaphors gives us additional insight into the way community workers draw upon meaning structures while constructing and communicating knowledge. DIMs interact with other meaning structures, suggesting preferred readings of events and information one encounters. The agency a person (or persons) has to respond to an encounter or experience is influenced by the meaning structures she draws from in order to make sense of the event. This is of significance to the field of community development as it suggests that agency and structure are both at work in the construction of projects, programs, and interventions in ways that are difficult, if not impossible to parse.

On the one hand, to suggest that meaning structures like DIMs predetermine the entirety of choices available to community workers is perhaps to overestimate the functioning of those structures. Likewise, the outcomes of negotiation between meaning structures in the interpretive process are also varied. On the other hand, to suggest that agency is unhindered by the horizons that meaning structures create and the preferred meanings that they suggest, is to underestimate the importance of drawing upon pre-coded meanings during the encoding and decoding process of communication. Structure and agency are co-constitutive of the meaning-making process. Isolating their influence from one another in a given action would be to remove part of each one’s constitution, rendering the parsing meaningless.

For these reasons, the study of dialectic identity metaphors in the context of community worker identity construction and collective action is not an exercise in trying
to isolate the influence of agency from that of structure. Rather, analyzing the DIM in context gives us clues into the overall process, leaving for now parts of the internal workings of that process to be ambiguous. It is beyond the bounds of this study to claim whether or not sequential causal relationships in situ exist in the meaning-making process. At any rate, if they do, they are surely fleeting relationships that are likely not predictable since their nature would be contingent on all the factors involved in structure and agency at any given moment. It is therefore reasonable to pursue an understanding of the constitutive causality of the processes here in question without a future promise of sequential or directional causality. To the extent that questions of sequential, directional causation in DIMs interest future inquiries, I welcome the exercising of such agency.

In the remainder of this chapter, however, I will consider the ways in which dialectic identity metaphors act as meaning structures for creating and communicating knowledge and provoking collective action. Calling on the shared identity of Kumaoni community workers demonstrated by the backward/modern, drudgery/happiness, and corruption/honesty DIMs; I will discuss the way collective action is undertaken in situ among CWs. In doing so, I will explicate the nature of DIMs and discuss their interaction with other meaning structures as described by Hall (1973/2006).

How Do DIMs Suggest Preferred Readings?

Dialectic identity metaphors are a kind of meaning structure and therefore provide pre-coded information to the communicative process. That is, as discussed in previous chapters, a DIM provides a sort of shorthand orientation within the story-telling process by which the world is made intelligible. For example, the corruption/honesty DIM allows
community workers in Kumaon to quickly make sense of the information and experiences they encounter that are related to that specific DIM. When a Kumaoni CW encounters a situation, an apparently relevant DIM provides information based on prior interactions that helps the CW make sense of a new experience. Through the repetition of communicative acts, which reinforce prior interpretations of a kind of encounter or experience, the dialectic identity metaphor is formed and maintained. Since the information used to make sense of a new encounter or experience is interpreted using previously coded meanings and messages (from meaning structures), a preference is developed for confirming prior interpretations. In this way, preferred interpretations from available meaning structures tend to be dominant modes for sense-making.

Dialectic identity metaphors are a specific sort of meaning structure in that they offer personal orientation as part of the pre-coded meaning. Whereas any socio-cultural, economic, and political meaning structure may explain relationships between individuals, a DIM offers the meaning-maker a personal place in the world being explained and thereby contributes to a sense of individuation. So, for instance, where the pre-coded information of the meaning structure “modernity” may direct interpretation of encounters and experiences in a general way, the backward/modern DIM further tells the individual meaning-maker where he fits into that world. Thus, when one has an encounter or experience, it becomes intelligible through a process of encoding where one draws upon meaning structures, including DIMs, that help one quickly make sense of the encounter or experience, explaining it in terms that are both personal and general. In doing so one participates in the reinforcement of preferred readings that suggest specific interpretations.
To What Meaning-Making Do DIMs Contribute?

I have stated that DIMs help make sense of the world, but what kind of sense is being made using them? In other words, what kinds of pre-coded meanings are provided by DIMs? I will briefly touch on five areas of interpretation that dialectic identity metaphors may provide information for in the process of constructing and communicating knowledge.

The first area of interpretation is the process of individuation. In the construction and communication of knowledge, making sense of the world is made personal through negotiation of dialectic identities between competing and/or complimentary metaphors. It is within this process that a person seems to participate in the social construction of both a sense of the ‘we’ and the ‘me’ in addition to the ‘they’ and ‘you’. The disavowal/avowal process is an individual and collective act within which individuation is practiced. For instance, Kumaoni CWs who draw on the corruption/honesty DIM gain a sense of individuation as they consider their personal and collective ethical practices. In this sense-making practice, individual CWs are faced with personal and collective choices (i.e. “Am I [is he] corrupt or honest?”) in which the identities of the individual CW and her other are discursively constructed. In this way, DIMs can provide information for the interpretive construction of the self.

Uncertainty reduction is the second area of interpretation. DIMs allow a person to reduce the stress that comes from trying to make sense of the ambiguity and complexity of life. For instance, the backward/modern DIM among Kumaoni CWs reduces the anxiety a CW may experience in encountering significant inequities between villagers and him by offering an explanation of the causes and circumstances that lead to such
inequity. In this case, the juxtaposition between ignorance on the part of villagers and the knowledgeable character of CWs provided community workers a relatively simple interpretation of why things were the way they were. Therefore, a DIM may offer interpretations of encounters and experiences that reduce personal or social uncertainty.

A third area of interpretation provided by dialectic identity metaphors is as a vehicle for ideology. That is, DIMs also provide a mode for introducing generalized ideological explanations of the way the world works into individual interpretations of encounters or experiences. As meaning structures contain fragments of ideology (Hall, 1973/2006), dialectic identity metaphors provide pre-coded messages that carry ideological presuppositions. For instance, the backward/modern DIM contains fragments of progressive or liberal (in the classical sense) ideology built on assumptions that society is on a single, inevitable path from an uncivilized to an increasingly civilized one. DIMs, being socially and politically constructed, therefore offer interpretive suggestions in the area of ideology.

The fourth area of interpretation is that of creating moral imperatives. DIMs deliver fragments of ideology into the most simple of interpretation, providing guidelines for understanding what is just or unjust, to who one is responsible, and how one is expected to respond to the presence of injustice. For example, as discussed in Chapter 4, the drudgery/happiness DIM creates a sense of moral obligation among Kumaoni CWs by reminding CWs of their shared identity as being ‘from the villages’ while also explaining one of the primary causes of this inequity in terms of the inequitable distribution of ignorance and knowledge. So, DIMs can provide interpretation of right
and wrong while locating the individual and collective within the landscape of justice/injustice.

The fifth area of interpretation is the development of personal and collective *philosophies of change*. Dialectic identity metaphors also suggest to a person how to change future encounters and experiences of their own as well as those of others. These sometimes simple, sometimes complex, philosophies of change are constructed from the interpretive frameworks provided by meaning structures. Additionally, DIMs locate the individual and collective within the landscape they believe needs changing. With these understandings of how the world around them is working, an individual may choose to apply their discursive philosophy of change as directed by the DIM. For CWs in Kumaon, this is exemplified by community workers who draw upon the areas of interpretation from multiple DIMs to construct projects, programs, and interventions. An iteration of this is observable in the shared philosophy of change I will give the shorthand title “Change Happens Through Exposure” (i.e., the exposure of villagers to the implementation of projects in other places in order to reduce the villagers’ ignorance). The “Change Happens Through Exposure” philosophy of change combines sense-making around the explanations and causes of backwardness and modernity and drudgery and happiness. In other words, a Kumaoni CW finds in her dialectic identity metaphors the personalized, anxiety-reducing information that directs her how to respond to a sense of moral obligation. This is her philosophy of change. I will return to this in a moment, but first a word about preferred readings and action.
How Does a Preferred Reading Manifest in Collective Action?

Because dialectic identity metaphors and other meaning structures are socially constructed, they are produced and reproduced in discourse and are not the sole property of a single person. The preferred readings of meaning structures therefore suggest meanings and messages across individuals and groups of people, contributing to its own reproduction and a pattern of status quo confirmation (Hall, 1973/2006). Since sense-making and knowledge production are discursively constructed, any action taken by an individual or group that draws upon interpretive knowledge will reflect the preferred readings found in the shared discourse. The more dominant a preferred reading is, the less likely that alternative readings will even be conceivable, let alone achieve social acceptance. And because encounters with and orderings of the material world are made intelligible through discursive sense-making, preferred readings have considerable material consequences, especially when they become dominant or are naturalized (Hall, 1973/2006).

Collective action is also subject to the influence of preferred readings. If a group of people recognizes a problem to which they would like to respond, but only make sense of the problem using pre-coded messages and meanings that set a mental horizon for understanding and therefore responding to the problem, they will likely limit their collective action to a universe of possibilities bound by the consciousness that has created and maintains the problem in question. If the problem is considered intractable or is naturalized by the dominant meaning structures, the problem may be seen as inevitable and therefore accepted. For community workers, this is clearly a point of importance as the possible outcomes of an intervention may be delimited by the very conceptualization
of the problem (see e.g., Peterson & Knopf, 2016). The preferred reading of a given encounter or experience, in context, is therefore of great consequence to the possibilities of collective action.

Take as an example the preferred reading of CWs encountering out-migration in the Kumaoni Himalaya. Among the approximately 45 community workers I interacted with at CHEA, GRASSROOTS, and SUDHA, the overwhelming interpretive consensus was that outmigration was happening in Kumaon, that it was a bad thing that needed to be stopped, and that it was an unnatural process traceable to tough economic conditions. This sentiment, too, was repeated by nearly all of the 125+ volunteers, community members, and others with whom I spoke around Kumaon. For the CWs, the reasons for outmigration were found in sense-making that drew upon the backward/modern and drudgery/happiness DIMs. According to CW stories, people in the villages were unhappy, poor, and in need of education and work – so they were leaving, ignorant of the misery that likely waited for them in the cities. This stance was contrasted by at least one educator, not an employee of CHEA, GRASSROOTS, or SUDHA, who viewed the outmigration as an inevitable, global pattern of rural youths moving to urban centers to use the education that has been made “universally” available in India. This perspective was never vocalized or implied by any of the approximately 45 CWs. If the CWs had shared the educator’s indifference to the phenomenon of outmigration, they likely would have put less emphasis on taking collective action to address the issue. Instead, the preferred reading of their encounter with outmigration suggested that it was an unnatural crisis requiring urgent response through collective action that addressed the problems of
ignorance and drudgery. The preferred reading gave shape to the type of collective action taken.

How Does a Philosophy of Change Become a Best Practice?

A philosophy of change, drawn from DIMs and practiced over time, sometimes comes to be seen as a ‘best practice’. This may be due to the identity affirmation that comes from the performance of suggested roles that a DIM offers a person or collective. For instance, application of the philosophy of change noted above, “Change Happens Through Exposure”, will reconstruct itself when put into practice. When a Kumaoni CW finds in his dialectic identity metaphors the personalized, anxiety-reducing information that directs him how to respond to a sense of moral obligation, he performs a process of sense-making that confirms his place in the world and gives him a greater sense of agency toward his circumstances. The repeated performance of this process deepens his sense of identity and agency, becoming interwoven into his construction of self.

Practices prescribed by the philosophy of change, in this example the exposure of villagers to the implementation of projects in other places in order to reduce the villagers’ ignorance that I have given the shorthand name “Change Happens Through Exposure”, serve to confirm the identity associated with the philosophy’s DIM (backward/modern). In this example, the CW performs a practice that reproduces a situation where he is knowledgeable and the villager is ignorant. The philosophy of change thereby confirms the CW’s personal identity avowal by continuously prescribing the very practices that help (re)produce the backward/modern dialectic. The problem and the fix can both be found in the DIM as it provides the meaning-making horizons. When people who share a
DIM communicate a shared sense of agency, the associated ways of being that they collectively reflect upon can become canonized as best practices. The practice that conforms to these horizons becomes the “best” practice since it confirms the sense-making and identity construction that is preferred by the dominant meaning structures. This can happen with any philosophy of change suggested through the DIMs, including adoption of multiple philosophies of change.

I am suggesting that it is a shared sense of identity, constructed from contextual meaning structures – including and especially dialectic identity metaphors – from which community workers draw information in order to create projects, programs, and interventions. This process, more than consideration of formal theory, directs the helping approach in which community workers engage and informs the adoption of “best practices”. Because the projects, programs, and interventions are discursively conceived with meaning structures that contain ideological fragments, it is reasonable to look at those practices to understand what ideology is present in the knowledge production and identity construction of community workers. That is, by examining the ideological fragments in a project, program, or intervention, it is possible to observe ideologies at work in the sense-making of Kumaoni CWs. In order to explore this process, the next chapter introduces part of the greater ideological discourse regarding development in India and Kumaon so that the ideological fragments in the work of Kumaoni CWs can be further examined in Chapter 7.
Chapter 6

ABOUT DEVELOPMENT IN KUMAON

Development is a word of great complexity, ambiguity, and power (Escobar, 2011; Mignolo, 2011, 2012; Rist, 2014; Sen, 1999; Sivaramakrishnan & Agrawal, 2003). Sivaramakrishnan and Agrawal (2003) wrote, “Development, in its various guises, has surely been the most powerful influence structuring social and economic transformations in the non-Western world in this century” (p. 2). In India today, the ideological struggle is ongoing to interpret what is development, who is developed, and where development should take the people of the world’s largest democracy (see e.g., Klenk, 2004; Guha, 2000, 2007; Sinha, 2003; Sivaramakrishnan & Agrawal, 2003). In that discourse, two cultural and political figures perhaps have cast the longest shadows since India’s 1947 independence – Jawaharlal Nehru and Mohandas Gandhi. Nehru, the first prime minister of India and central figure in the framing of the Indian constitution and national regime; and Gandhi, the leader of the Indian independence movement, were known to be friends, but held differing, even contradictory views of the way the newly independent nation should embrace its future.

Nehru, for example, believed that industrial modernization was the route to poverty alleviation at home, international respect, and economic power. Gandhi, on the other hand, had long based his vision of ‘Indian home rule’ on village-based, simple livelihoods that were categorically opposed to industrialization (Guha, 2007). During the nationalist debates on Indian reconstruction that characterized the pre- and post-independence era, the central contradiction was between “Nehru’s vision of rapid industrialization as the basis of the developmentalist state, versus Gandhi’s vision of
revived village-level economies as the cornerstone of national development” (Klenk, 2003, p. 102). It could be maintained that despite enormous economic growth and industrialization in India, this contradiction remains unresolved as hundreds of millions of Indians currently live in poverty. Indeed, these ideological differences seem to play out at the village level, even in the very identity construction of some community workers.

The negotiation between Gandhian and Nehruvian ideological visions of development is contested in a number of contexts in Indian society (Klenk, 2003). In the context of Kumaoni CWs, the conceptualization of development rarely, if ever, takes on an ideologically pure form attributable to a fully constructed school of thought. Instead, CWs draw from an ideologically ambiguous form of development. The Gandhian and Nehruvian visions of ‘development’ are negotiated through the construction and contestation of localized narratives in India. And, of course, these two visions of development do not arrive at this time in history in the exact form they were constructed. Thus, to understand how the ideology of development interacts with DIMs in Kumaon, some broad outlines of the negotiation of development should be offered.

Indian Visions Of Development

Gandhi’s view of development, while certainly concerned with the material wellbeing of Indians, was primarily pegged to a progressive ethic rather than a universal sense of civilization on the march. As Moore (2003) points out, “When Gandhi speaks of progress it is invariably as an ethical relationship that an individual or a community has with itself, with others, and with its deities” (p. 183). This is a break with the inevitable, evolutionary vision of development and progress of which Gandhi’s contemporaries in
the West spoke (Rist, 2014). Moore continues: “[Gandhi’s] challenge to liberal visions of politics, freedom, and sovereignty entailed an assault on Eurocentric teleologies of ‘progress,’ a discourse of universal improvement that mistook Europe’s historical hubris for a global civilizational history” (2003, p. 183-184, emphasis original).

To say that Gandhi’s vision of progress was primarily ethical is not to say that it was unconcerned with the material. In fact, the material was the site of contestation and construction of an alternative development to that of the West (Klenk 2004), perhaps most visually symbolized by his use of the spinning wheel to make his own clothes (Moore, 2003). The politics of that ethic espoused self-sufficiency, anti-colonial nationalism, and a strong affinity for the dignity of work (Moore, 2003). The vision of development coming from the West was in Gandhi’s view, satanic (Guha, 2000). It was his understanding that Western ideals of development, modernity, and progress were attached to the infinite expansion of human want and ultimately greed. In contrast, Gandhi understood village life to place natural limits on the accumulation and consumption of excess. Guha (2000) comments:

“One of Gandhi’s best know aphorisms is: ‘The world has enough for everybody’s need, but not enough for one person’s greed:’ an exquisitely phrased one-line environmental ethic... [that] he himself practiced; when he died... this man, whose followers were reckoned in the tens of millions, and who helped bring down one of the most powerful empires in history, had possessions that could fit in a small box” (p. 22).

It was in the daily hard work of peasants, far from the central power structures in Delhi and other cities, that Gandhi believed the promise of independence laid. Gandhi understood that peasants were the backbone of India and often said “India lived in her
villages” (Guha, 2007, p. 209). For this reason, development and progress were anything but an inevitable (let alone desirable) journey from an agricultural, rural life to an industrial, urban one. Indeed, the participation in voluntary simplicity by villagers was viewed by Gandhi as both the undoing of colonial control and the source of power to forge a self-reliant, diverse, and independent nation.

Nehru’s vision of development, in contrast with Gandhi’s, was predicated on the accumulation of capital (Sinha, 2003). The Nehruvian vision, built around five year plans intended to generate and widely distribute wealth, was one of centralized, carefully planned and incremental change. The strategy was based on the belief that equitable distribution of the increasing capital would further legitimate the new national regime in the eyes of the nation. Sinha describes the strategy thusly,

“The necessity of development as a project of accumulation was premised on its ability to eradicate poverty, provide employment, deliver community development, and meet basic needs. In an upward spiral, these goals were at the same time desirable, as well as necessary to create new productive citizens who would aspire to and achieve ever higher levels of affluence, employment, development and needs provision” (2003, p. 295).

The underlying belief in the Nehruvian vision, as embodied in the First Five-Year Plan for India, was that villagers were important for but inadequately equipped actors in the development of India (Sinha, 2003). Indian nationalists tended to see the villagers as stagnant in progress, regardless of what the villagers avowed (Guha, 2007). Indeed, villagers were seen by nationalists as not only in need of the outcomes of development, but also in need of a new and burning desire to seek it.
The capacity and desire for development became the central goal of the national Indian education system. India’s Report of the Secondary Education Commission in 1952-53 stated, “The aim of secondary education is to train the youth of the country to be good citizens who will be competent to play their part effectively in the social reconstruction and economic development of their country” (Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, 1972). Nehru, Indian nationalists, and Indian capitalists saw education as the key to India’s economic development and steps were taken from even before independence to ensure it was carried out in the ways they felt would increase capacity (Guha, 2007). In this way, nation building has been at the heart of Indian public education since its independence in 1947 (Advani, 1996).

But because the legitimation of the new national regime was interwoven into the Nehruvian vision for development, it was “necessary for the state to intervene in social life, and at the same time for it to seek the ‘cooperation’ of the people” (Sinha, 2003, p. 295). National actors in rural India utilized Gandhian Self-Help groups in order to involve villagers and attempt to inculcate a sense of self-direction toward economic development among them. However, currency crises in the 1960s, combined with reports from the Planning Commission’s Program Evaluation Agency reporting a failure to increase productivity or reduce poverty in rural India, gave justification to the Indian national government for the rapid and centralized industrialization projects of the Green Revolution (Sinha, 2003). Thus, that which began as a vision for partnership between centralized national planners and cooperative villagers toward incremental development was quickly replaced by rapid and massive industrialization projects led by the national government and large-scale capitalists.
Development In Kumaon

Forests have long been the cultural and economic foundation for the hill peoples of Kumaon. By the time of independence in 1947, political conflict between the hill peoples of Kumaon and outside forces like the British and private timber companies had raged for decades (Agrawal, 2001). Kumaoni’s had supported the independence movement in part so that they could have more autonomy over the forests of their region. However, Nehru’s plan for modernization and industrialization also relied on the exploitation of Indian raw materials, including the forests of the central Himalaya. This meant that the issues of rapid deforestation and the continued disappearance of firewood and fodder, Kumaon’s largest ecological problems in the 19th and early 20th centuries, did not disappear with the British in 1947 (Tucker, 1984).

After independence, Kumaon was placed under the control of the regional government of Uttar Pradesh (see Table 1) despite geographic and cultural differences between the hilly areas of Kumaon and the plains areas that made up the majority of the new state (i.e. Uttar Pradesh). The 1950s and 60s saw rapid growth in population and increased demands both regionally and nationally on Kumaoni agricultural land to produce more food; continuing a century long trend of deforestation that left forests at a fraction of what they were when the British arrived in the early 1800s (Tucker, 1984). The continued corrupt practices and mismanagement of forests by private contractors led the regional government of Uttar Pradesh to transfer management of all privately managed forests to either the Indian Forest Department or to community-managed forests called van panchayats (Tucker, 1984).
Table 1. Summary of National and Local Government Control of Kumaon

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ruled from...</th>
<th>National Government</th>
<th>Provincial Government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1815</td>
<td>British Raj</td>
<td>Kumaoni Province of British Colony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Republic of India</td>
<td>Indian state of Uttar Pradesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Republic of India</td>
<td>Indian state of Uttaranchal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Republic of India</td>
<td>State name changed to Uttarakhand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the leaders of the Indian Forest Department sought control of the remaining productive forests in the 1970s, political unrest turned to action in the region of Kumaon and its neighbor to the northwest, the region of Garhwal (Tucker, 1984). This alternative development movement was called Chipko Andolan (literally movement to embrace). Districts in these two regions, like Tehri Garhwal, experienced some of the most stark income inequalities in the country (Bhatt, 1990; Sinha, 2003). Members of the movement demanded drastic changes in forest management following a decade of rampant deforestation and devastating floods made worse by the lack of ground cover (Bhatt, 1990). When foresters would come to log, members from the Chipko Andolan would gather around trees and even hug them when threatened by the loggers (Bhatt, 1990, p. 8). The movement brought attention from around the world to the situation in the Indian Himalaya, eventually leading to a call for a “people’s movement for afforestation” (restoration of forests) from Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1985 (Bhatt, 1990, p. 9). Still, the relationship between villagers in Kumaon and the Indian Forest Department remained strained throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s as the highly bureaucratized
and complex system of regulation produced uneven enforcement that often fell most heavily on the poor and lower-caste (Agrawal, 2001).

Despite the massive industrial development efforts by the Indian government, the Gandhian vision for development was not lost in Kumaon (Klenk, 2003). In addition to the Chipko Andolan, Gandhians in Kumaon experimented with education as a form of alternative development, in part through the creation of ashrams – retreat-like schools for a kind of holistic education. The Indian government had used education as a tool to legitimize a single view of modernity and development in line with Nehru’s vision for rapid industrialization (Klenk, 2003). Education was used to create a discourse equating the reconstruction of India and national unity to industrial economic development (Advani, 1996) connected to heavy industry (Klenk, 2003). Gandhi’s experiments with education stood in stark contrast to this trend, even before independence. His vision for *naii taaliim* (literally “new education”) focused on the relevancy of education for villagers and the inclusion of girls and women (Klenk, 2003). Because the main school system taught the singular, industrialized vision of modernity and development, networks of ashrams were created around India and Kumaon beginning in the 1940s, offering alternative education designed to usher in the Gandhian aspiration of *graam swaraj*, or village self-sufficiency (Klenk, 2003, p. 104). Thus, Kumaon was a site of particular interest in Gandhian ideology as its people felt marginalized by the national government’s development agenda. In this way, Kumaon was part of a national pattern of marginalized rural localities where Gandhi’s legacy enjoyed particular popularity.

Development debates between Nehruvian and Gandhian visions of improved wellbeing have continued from the 1940s until present time. As the Indian government
sought legitimization through hegemonic development practices, those opposing the Nehruvian development project cooperated in the legitimization of the national government by taking up a populist discourse of “national interest” and “public interest” (Sinha, 2003). This is important to the context of Kumaon where cultural and historical distinctions between Kumaon and Garhwal began to be replaced by a “hill people” identity in the area now referred to as Uttarakhand (Sinha, 2003). In the formation of the Republic of India, forgetting past distinctions became an important aspect of constructing a national and regional identity upon which government legitimacy could rest (Agrawal, 2001).

Gandhian themes of non-cooperation, self-sufficiency, and throwing off outside rule also served the “Uttarakhand Movement” to create a new Indian state out of the northern regions of Uttar Pradesh in the 1990s. Activists had grown evermore skeptical of the central planning capabilities of the government in Uttar Pradesh’s capital, Lucknow, during the 70s, 80s, and 90s (Sinha, 2003). There was a growing consensus among activists that the villagers of the northern hilly regions of Uttar Pradesh, that is Kumaon and Garhwal, faced such varied and distinct issues from the plains and urban centers of Uttar Pradesh that cooperation with provincial programs was no longer viable if the communities of the central Himalaya were to escape poverty and limit the rampant environmental degradation (Sinha, 2003).

The so called “Uttarakhand Movement” was not about the establishment of its own nation, but rather a response to deeply felt differences that villagers of the central Himalaya held toward the plains of Uttar Pradesh (Mawdsley, 1997; Sinha, 2003). In particular, the hill country of Garhwal and Kumaon had an unusually high percentage of
high caste Brahmins and Rajputs (Mawdsley, 1997). When the Uttar Pradesh government began to implement quotas for lower and middle caste members in provincial government employment and higher education admission, students in Dehra Dun (Uttarakhand’s now-capitol) began to protest and the unrest spread rapidly across Garhwal and Kumaon (Mawdsley, 1997). The agitation over the quotas, known as “reservations”, broadened to include regional and local concerns regarding the anti-liquor movement, environmental degradation, and women’s rights (Mawdsley, 1997). The deepest issue, though, was a longstanding one. Mawdsley (1997) described it:

“Perhaps the most important issue… is the notion that the hills are the victim of internal colonialism, not just in terms of their raw materials, but also in terms of the rule and administration of baharis and maidaini-walas (outsiders and plains peoples) who, it is felt, simply do not understand the special needs and differences of the mountains” (p. 2226, italics original).

In the language of this study, it could be argued that a shared dialectic identity metaphor in Uttarakhand is found in the avowal of hill people identity and the disavowal of maidaini-walas identity. As a result of collective action among those avowing a hill people identity, the area was granted statehood and was formed on November 9, 2000 under the name Uttarakhandal (Klenk, 2004). Its name was formally changed to Uttarakhand in 2006.

Development and Kumaoni NGO Discourse

Development has played a prominent role in the mission and vision creation of the three Kumaoni NGOs engaged in this study. Two of the NGOs have the word
development in their names (*Pan-Himalayan Grassroots Development Foundation* and *Society for Uttaranchal Development & Himalayan Action*). The third, Central Himalayan Environment Association, features development prominently throughout their literature. Development, then, is an important conceptual metaphor and meaning structure in the context of the Kumaoni community workers. And as development is a significant site for ideological contestation in India and Kumaon, it is a worthwhile meaning structure to examine in order to discover the ways ideological fragments are manifest in dialectic identity metaphors of Kumaoni CWs. Drawing on the brief contextual discussion of development in India and Kumaon just completed, the following chapter examines in greater detail the presence of ideological fragments in the shared DIMs of Kumaoni CWs as manifested in collective action and avowed best practices.
Chapter 7

ABOUT IDEOLOGY

Ideology is intricately woven into the human process of sense-making. Dialectic identity metaphors personalize and localize fragments of ideology into the context of the person or people in question. The fragments of ideology in meaning structures produce and are reproduced by the communicative process. That is, fragments of ideology in meaning structures offer a semi-systematic interpretation of events and encounters to sense-makers. I say semi-systematic because the communicators do not need to understand the entirety of the ideological system from which they are drawing in order to utilize it. If a small portion (i.e. a fragment) of an ideological explanation is useful in the communicative process, it may be used even if contradictory fragments have previously been drawn upon. For this reason, the identity construction of a person is likely to contain fragments of many ideological explanations, provided she is not in a closed system of ideological explanations. In the context of Kumaon, there exist multiple ideological explanations in the meaning structures upon which CWs draw, including in shared dialectic identity metaphors.

This chapter considers the way ideology interacts with the projects, programs, and interventions of Kumaoni CWs, specifically in regards to the ideological concept of development. Drawing from the development ideologies of Gandhi and Nehru, I will show how these distinct visions for India’s future act as meaning structures in the contemporary work of community NGOs in Kumaon. Specifically, I will show that dialectic identity metaphors contain fragments of ideologies that in their pure form may be contradictory, but are reproduced in situ in a hybrid form that negotiates inter-
ideological inconsistencies in ways that are apparently satisfactory for community workers. Finally, I will discuss the production and reproduction of local Kumaoni development ideologies that have become dominant in their own right, resistant to ideologically purist forms of their genealogical roots.

To begin, I have applied a Gandhian lens and a Nehruvian lens to the interpretation of Kumaoni CW practices. After doing so, I interpreted seven Gandhian themes and six Nehruvian themes as ideological fragments present in the discourses, projects, programs, and interventions of community workers in Kumaon. First, the seven Gandhian themes are explored in detail. Then, I expound on Nehruvian themes. Summaries of both Gandhian and Nehruvian themes and associated ideological fragments in Kumaoni CW practice can be seen summarized in Tables 2 and 3. In each case, I will take a few themes at a time, eventually demonstrating how each theme is interwoven into Kumaoni practice.

Table 2. Gandhian Themes as Ideological Fragments in Kumaoni CW Practice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gandhian Themes</th>
<th>Ideological Fragments in Practice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Relationships</td>
<td>Interest in gender and economic equity; emphasis on honest dealings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Knowledge</td>
<td>Utilization of existing villager capacities and know-how</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic Education</td>
<td>Elements of religious, cultural, scientific, and justice pedagogical approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Help</td>
<td>Establish self help groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Reliance</td>
<td>Focus on long-term ownership of projects by village participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village-Based</td>
<td>Implementation level of projects, programs, and interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Localized Economy</td>
<td>Protect agency of villagers to continue agrarian lifestyle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fragments of Gandhi’s ideological vision for development appear in Kumaoni CWs’ stories regarding their practices. The first few Gandhian themes to note are Ethical Relationships, Traditional Knowledge, and Holistic Education. Gandhi’s reverence for traditional village practices was not simple romanticism. His worldview insisted on balance with one’s neighbor, one’s ecosystem, and one’s deity(s) through an embodied ethic (Moore, 2003). Kumaoni CWs often expressed similar sentiments:

“The fact is sustaining ecology is a way of life. It is not something you do today and not tomorrow. Which means you have to have a very long-term engagement of communities in this whole activity. And it has to be passed on from generation to generation. Now if that is the scenario then it is a very tough one” – Kumaoni CW.

Development projects, programs, and interventions in Kumaon often reflected this understanding of the world. It was common to create practices that sought to build upon local knowledge, preserve traditional understandings, and celebrate local cultural heritage. For instance, during my fieldwork, CHEA was working with beekeepers in the Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand (in eastern Kumaon) where villagers have been practicing beekeeping for generations. CHEA’s projects have sought to honor local knowledge and practices while offering advice and technological insight to improve efficiency and yield of honey. Nonetheless, CHEA’s aim is that villagers in Pithoragarh should be able to continue to make a livelihood out of their traditional practices should they so choose.
Community workers in each of the three NGOs in this study made efforts to preserve the elements of village life that local communities desired to keep. Still, a sort of sorrow was expressed as if mourning a way of life they feared could not last. One community worker reflected:

“Traditionally all these things worked fine, because there was actually maybe a situation of abundance also, so it worked. But also in the situation of abundance there was some very wise things that they had developed. [When] better technology came in; it’s not the technology that was bad, it was the systems that came in... where you felt that, oh, some of these things [traditional technologies] are not supposed to be... And we started getting more and more detached from the traditional ways of looking after our natural resources” – Kumaoni CW.

Thus, there was among Kumaoni CWs a very real sense of commitment to upholding the agency of villagers when it came to the preservation of traditional knowledge and cultural practices.

Two more Gandhian themes I will highlight are *Self-Help* and *Self-Reliance*. As discussed in the previous chapter, Gandhi’s vision of development was strongly centered on the notion of self-sufficiency and home rule. He felt this would be accomplished only if villagers practiced their agency without relying upon the government for their needs. Fragments of this ideology can be seen in Kumaoni CWs’ insistence on using participatory methods. Participation is an important element of CHEA, GRASSROOTS, and SUDHA’s programming. As the CWs who make up these organizations construct projects, programs, and interventions, they reported employing various kinds of participatory practices with the stated goals of increasing confidence, self-reliance, and
sustainability. Those practices included responding to the expressed felt needs of villagers, starting village self-help groups, and facilitating participatory action research with villagers. Reflecting on what development means in his context, a community worker stated:

“Development means that where we are working... I give the example of a bamboo visit. People were not able to make modern items [from bamboo] for [handicraft] projects. And when we implement a project, we come to know, this is the new things which we have to use. So this is the changes I think is one of the developments. People have developed their capacities due to exposures – it’s also development. People increase their incomes also – I’m thinking it’s development. People are more confident – I think it’s development. People are taking participation in all the [NGO’s] activities. I think participant women are coming forward to [involve] themselves in development” – Kumaoni CW.

For this CW, participation was a sign of self-help and self-reliance as evidenced by the increased confidence and agency of villagers. And, this process of villagers confidence and agency building through participation was one he reported benefitting from personally as well:

“Since we have successfully handled the projects, I have developed my capacities to work with the community. Before the project I usually hesitated to discuss with the community, as well as with other seniors [such as village elders] and others in government, officials. Now I feel confident to talk with them and to give our views to them – to solve, sort out the problem” – Kumaoni CW.
The sense of shared identity with villagers as being ‘from the villages’ is also reflected in Gandhian themes. Interpretation of discourses, projects, programs and interventions revealed that the themes of *Village-Based* and *Localized Economy* were an important shared element of the philosophies of change among Kumaoni CWs. As the pedagogical tool of exposure visits was common across the participating Kumaoni CWs, so, too, was a sort of grassroots, bottom-up mentality that had ideological parallels to Gandhi’s beliefs in the centrality of villages to the identity and future of India (see e.g., Guha, 2000, 2007; Klenk, 2003; Sinha, 2003). Guha notes that “It was Mahatma Gandhi who famously remarked that ‘India lives in her villages’” (2000, p. 114). That sentiment has faint echoes in the words and deeds of community workers who valued village life while also desiring to see its difficult character lessoned:

“We are also from villages, belonging to Almora – small places. So, when I see what is the condition of the village and how agriculture is not sufficient, forests are degrading nowadays, employment is... less. So, I think that if I can’t go outside then I should work here for our area, help peoples as much as I can” — Kumaoni CW.

While it is not fair to say that the valuing of village life began with Gandhi (it long predates him), his idealized view of village life captured and in part validated for newly independent India a vision for an India built upon an agrarian lifestyle. It is fair to say that most of the Kumaoni CWs I engaged with very much wanted to protect villagers’ agency to choose such a village-based life.

In these ways, Gandhian ideological themes regarding development can be traced in the practices and discourse of Kumaoni community workers. This is not to say that all
or even most (perhaps none) of the Kumaoni CWs would avow an identity as Gandhians. There were many instances of contrasting ideological viewpoints, particularly with a Nehruvian flavor. Before I address the interaction of these contrasting ideologies, I will first discuss a number of themes connected to Nehru.

Table 3. Nehruvian Themes as Ideological Fragments in Kumaoni CW Practice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nehruvian Themes</th>
<th>Ideological Fragments in Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capital Accumulation</td>
<td>Establish joint liability groups and cooperatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Education</td>
<td>Education outcomes directed at marketability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Competitiveness</td>
<td>Utilization of co-branding, product development, and value chains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological Advancement</td>
<td>Exposure and provision of new technologies, tools, and methods to villagers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Centralized Leadership</td>
<td>Initial reliance on non-villager expertise to design and implement projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Intervention</td>
<td>Acting as outside catalyst to provoke community development projects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nehruvian Ideologies of Development in Kumaoni CW Practices

Like Gandhi, Nehru’s ideological vision for the development of India can be seen in the practices and discourses of Kumaoni CWs (see Table 3 for summary). It is worth noting once again, that the argument here is not that the words or actions of Gandhi or Nehru act as specific, consciously drawn upon guides for CW creation of projects, programs, and interventions. Instead, it is interpreted that Gandhian and Nehruvian ideological themes are identifiable within the ‘development’ discourses, projects, programs, and interventions of Kumaoni CWs – suggesting that these meaning structures
are drawn upon by the CWs engaged in this study. Those meaning structures offer pre-coded meanings and messages to CWs who are making sense of the world they have encountered and are responding to with collective action. The relationship between Gandhian or Nehruvian ideology and Kumaoni CW practice is not described here in a directional or mechanical causal relationship, but as part of a constitutive causal relationship in the construction and communication of knowledge and collective action. With that in mind, I will now consider the fragments of Nehruvian ideology that I interpret as present in the work of Kumaoni CWs.

Like Gandhi, Nehru’s vision of development for India is well documented and was briefly introduced in the previous chapter. The first Nehruvian themes to consider are those of *Capital Accumulation, Market Education, Market Competitiveness*, and *Technological Advancement*. It was Nehru’s view that India would develop economically and culturally if technocrats provided the needed expertise to create a planned economy where equitable distribution of economic growth would take place. He believed that capital accumulation was an important step in the national movement toward modernity and national legitimacy (Guha, 2007). This same goal (modernization and capital accumulation) is interpreted as the aim of many projects, programs, and interventions in Kumaon. One community worker described how villagers received his NGO’s efforts:

“Community response is overwhelming. And [they’re] now very interested because they think that to do this work [bamboo handicrafts] with traditional [tools and methods] is not good enough for them. And so they will use new tools, technologies for making their products – they earn more, for better income” – Kumaoni CW.
In order to provide education that would increase villagers’ ability to compete in the marketplace, CWs “introduce modern tools and technologies – lots of exposure is required” (Kumaoni CW).

Along with market-relevant education and technology transfer, CWs attempt to facilitate capital accumulation for villagers through the establishment of marketing cooperatives, savings and joint bank accounts, and practices meant to increase efficiency while establishing economic value chains. The Central Himalayan Environment Association reported in 2015 that such measures are key to the success of their projects:

“Development of value chain by experts and scientists in a holistic manner is the key approach for successful implementation of the project [creating additional income]. Involvement of women for value chain development and improving livelihood is being attempted through focused attention and by involving female facilitators at field level. The individual beneficiaries have been federated into JLGs [Joint Liability Groups] to ensure cooperation and also to enhance the bargaining power of the village communities” (CHEA, 2015, p. 24).

Similar practices were described by all three NGOs in this study. Kumaoni CWs placed much emphasis on the facilitation of collective action among villagers where capital accumulation allowed greater market competitiveness outside the local village (i.e. across Uttarakhand and India).

The second set of Nehruvian themes that can be seen in Kumaoni CW practices are Strong Centralized Leadership and Outside Intervention. Nehru believed that villagers must participate in the development of India, but also that villagers lacked the capacity to develop on their own. Thus, the Indian government created large-scale
economic and social development plans in line with Nehru’s vision (Guha, 2007). A similar belief was commonly expressed by Kumaoni CWs regarding the lack of capacity by villagers to self-start the development process. Some held that this was representative of a larger lack of leadership in India:

“When we were younger, we had many people we could look up to, right? I mean there were books that were inspiring us, there were people that were living out their lives who could have an impact on our thinking. I find that we as a generation have created a vacuum and the younger generations have really nobody like that to look up to” – Kumaoni CW.

This vacuum of leadership, combined with the shared concern for corruption and honesty in their work, was one reason that many Kumaoni CWs gave to justify their hands-on approach to leadership and facilitation.

It was a sentiment expressed by multiple Kumaoni CWs – the current local capacity to run government, lead development, and conduct research was inadequate. But where Nehru placed faith in government technocracy, Kumaoni CWs tended to place faith in NGO and academic technocracy. One community worker expressed concern with the Indian process of decentralization and its relation to national and local leadership:

“We have evolved a system where we tell our rulers that there is no qualifications required for you. I go for a job; I appear at an interview [motions to express one would not get a job if one showed up unqualified]. So where are we heading? Truly speaking, I mean. And that’s why there is a paucity of leadership if you look at it” – Kumaoni CW.

The idea that inclusive participation in development or governance meant training, education, and experience was not required was generally rejected among Kumaoni CWs.
In some ways, this reflects a view that went out of style in India in the decades of the 1980s, 90s, and 2000s during government efforts at decentralization, but that was held by Nehru and his acolytes. The necessity of intervention from the outside, although preferably by local technocrats rather than the government, is a Nehruvian ideological theme that Kumaoni CWs embrace.

**Mixed Messages and Meanings**

Gandhian and Nehruvian ideologies for development may be irreconcilable on a theoretical level. If one takes on Gandhi’s vision in totality and attempts to reconcile it with that of Nehru, it is likely to lead to significant ideological conflict. However, the Kumaoni CWs do not seem to experience that within their work. To be sure, internal conversations took place at each NGO regarding the ways in which their values and philosophies of change could be more finely honed or made more consistent. But the existential strife one might expect to see in a Nehruvian trying to also practice a Gandhian ethic was not observed among the Kumaoni CWs with whom I generated data.

Instead, Kumaoni community workers constructed their own ideologies by drawing upon the meaning structures provided by Gandhi and Nehru as well as others (such as the DIMs discussed earlier, local culture, Hinduism, and so on). Fragments of Gandhian ideology were drawn upon as needed or desired to interpret the world. So it was for Nehruvian ideology. But where CWs found one of those ideological views of development insufficient for understanding and communicating their encounters and experiences, they did not hesitate to leave other related ideological fragments behind.
For instance, participatory practices and self-help groups, which reflected fragments of Gandhian ideology, could be abandoned in the name of a Nehruvian need for centralized leadership if community workers felt it so justified. Likewise, the Nehruvian pursuit of capital accumulation was consistently tempered by a kind of Gandhian focus on localized, agrarian livelihoods. This negotiation of meaning structures and their ideological fragments could be interpreted as miscommunication or misappropriation of whole ideologies. Or, the negotiation could be seen as the usual processes of social construction and communication of new knowledge. If one privileges Gandhi and Nehru as ideological purists, then it might be easy to dismiss Kumaoni CWs’ process of meaning-making and collective action as immature, incomplete, or somehow confused.

But there seems little reason to privilege Gandhi or Nehru in quite that way. Certainly they are outsized figures in India whose influence on South Asian meaning-making is significant. But it must remembered that whatever coherence or purity one attributes to Gandhian or Nehruvian ideology regarding development has been attained through the repetition and recreation of what started for them and their followers as fragments of ideology drawn from their own available meaning structures, some from contexts vastly different than India. Gandhi, for instance, was strongly influenced by John Ruskin and Edward Carpenter, an English art critic and an English poet/philosopher, respectively (Guha, 2000). Nehru, of course, was educated at Cambridge and drew lessons from John Maynard Keynes and Karl Marx (Guha, 2007). The point is that calling the Kumaoni CWs’ shared ideological visions a sort of hybrid or mosaic of unlike
pieces, as it may appear in the preceding examination, is perhaps to misunderstand the construction and communication of knowledge.

It might be argued that an ideologue is not simply a person who draws upon ideology to make sense of the world; after all, I have argued, along with others (e.g., Hall 1973/2006), that all communicators do this. Rather, the ideologue is a person who insists upon consistency and coherence across ideological fragments and perceives that others do not or do so insufficiently. The extent to which ideologues achieve this consistency and coherence is not the aim of this inquiry. What is interesting to this discussion is the question of what is considered ideological consistency and coherence and how does the answer affect identity construction.

In the case of Kumaoni CWs, I have shown that some amount of shared identity exists. I have also demonstrated that shared meaning structures, including dialectic identity metaphors, are drawn upon in the construction and communication of knowledge. And, I have argued that those shared meaning structures contain ideological fragments that can be seen in community worker practice and discourse. With these insights, the ‘helper-helped’ dynamic can be further understood as an ideological process of meaning-making.
Chapter 8

ABOUT TELEOLOGICAL VISIONS IN KUMAON

This study demonstrates how interpretation of the way the world works not only contributes to general meaning-making, but connects to the process of constructing personal and collective identities. Furthermore, the interpretive sense-making process produces preferred readings that suggest appropriate collective action in response to moral imperatives. This sense-making process is a double hermeneutic, utilizing pre-coded interpretations to encode and decode information. Because pre-coded meanings and messages carry fragments of ideology, the very construction and communication of knowledge reproduces (and sometimes challenges) existing ideological interpretations of encounters and experiences.

Furthermore, this study suggests that identity construction also takes place within this process of knowledge creation and communication. That is, a person comes to know herself (i.e. construct an avowed identity) by drawing on meaning structures, including dialectic identity metaphors. The knowledge of who one is and what one should do with one’s life are not separately constructed or maintained. The meaning structures that provide pre-coded meanings and messages to the construction of knowledge about oneself can be the same pre-coded meaning structures that provide meanings and messages to the construction of collective action practices. In this study of Kumaoni community workers, I reason that at least three such meaning structures exist: the backward/modern, drudgery/happiness, and corruption/honesty dialectic identity metaphors.
As Kumaoni CWs draw upon (and thereby produce and reproduce) these DIMs, they further draw upon the pre-coded fragments of ideology that are found within all meaning structures. In this case, I have demonstrated that fragments of Gandhian and Nehruvian ideologies of development are among the fragments of ideology present in Kumaoni CWs’ shared DIMs. While the ideological fragments found in a given community worker’s sense-making, communication, and practice will be contingent on the meaning structures and preferred readings available to each CW, I assert that ideology is present in the most seemingly mundane knowledge construction and communication by all community workers. This is true because ideological fragments contribute to the creation of mental horizons within which CWs make sense of and respond to the world. By extension, all projects, programs, and interventions of the CWs also come into being with fragments of ideology interwoven into their very conceptualization. Accordingly, attention should be paid to the ways in which ideological assumptions are masked or naturalized in all community work, creating boundaries of what is possible.

One way that community development scholars make sense of the presence of ideology in CD practice is through the construction of teleological theories – “charters for action towards a goal” (Bhattacharyya, 2004, p. 10). A teleological theory is primarily prescriptive rather than explanatory. Ideologies such as democracy are this sort of theory as they advocate “a particular kind of social order and particular methodology for getting there” (Bhattacharyya, 2004, p. 10). In Hallsian terms, they are the kind of meaning structures that, like dialectic identity metaphors, help construct identity in terms of system and locate the agency of a person or people within a matrix of political choices.
The remainder of this chapter explores how Kumaoni CWs share a teleological vision for Kumaon using Bhattacharyyan principles of community development.

*Bhattacharyya’s Definition of Community Development*

Jnanabrata Bhattacharyya’s (1995, 2004) definition of community development has served as the foundation for further elaboration by other CD scholars (e.g., Hustedde & Ganowicz, 2004; Toomey, 2011) and is one of the most popular and widely read in CD literature (Taylor & Francis, 2016). A distinguishing characteristic of Bhattacharyya’s definition is his explicit discussion of purpose in community development and its relation to power through method and technique. Specifically, he accounts for the presence of power and political choices by arguing for an explicit teleological theory. Teleological theories do not only provide social explanations, but also “elaborate a vision of a kind of social order” based on political choices (Bhattacharyya, 2004, p. 10). He provides as an example theories of democracy or educational policy.

“We assess the quality of a teleological theory by the reasonableness (to us) of its assumptions or value premises (e.g., We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal) and the logical coherence between the assumptions, the methods, and the goal. The assumptions or value premises are political choices, unlike the axioms of physics. Accordingly, a theory of community development will specify its purpose (goal, rationale), its premises, and its methods” (2004, p 10).

As stated above, political choice is part and parcel to a teleological goal or outcome. Therefore, a value premise will join purpose and method in order to construct a
teleological theory. For Bhattacharyya, the value premise for community development springs from the definitions of the individual terms – community and development.

He defines community in terms of solidarity arguing that it best communicates the essence of the term. While he acknowledges the importance of place to some communities, he argues that delinking place and community allows community development to better interact with a world where cohesion and solidarity happen in many ways across multiple places and even time. He draws on Durkheim’s understanding of solidarity that sees a shared identity and “a code for conduct or norms, both deep enough that a rupture affects the members emotionally and other ways” (Bhattacharyya, 2004, p. 12). Thus, Bhattacharyya concludes, “We can say that any social configuration that possess shared identity and norms is a community” (2004, P. 12).

In defining development, the value premise of the term community development begins to come into focus. Bhattacharyya draws upon social theorists like Sen (1999, 2009) and Giddens (1986) in order to express a common value-based concern in the social sciences and humanities: that people should be able to choose to order their world according to their own meanings and define themselves in their own terms. Thus, choice on the part of people and action *with* and not *for* people are two value premises Bhattacharyya sees in development as agency. He contrasts this with service providers who do *for* communities and at times create dependence. In such situations, critical consciousness, in the Freirean (1970/2012) sense, is not allowed to bloom. Alternatively, in Bhattacharyya’s (2004) conceptualization, “Community development in order to promote agency aims at generating critical consciousness, addressing problems that the affected people ‘own’ and define, and take active measures to solve” (p. 13). At the same
time he contrasts this concern with the denial of inter-dependence and mutuality that can co-opt the language of agency (e.g. self-help) as an excuse for isolationism or denial of common interest and humanity (Bhattacharyya, 1995, 2004).

Combining these definitions of community and development, Bhattacharyya asserts that community development is based on the premise “that people have an inalienable right to agency and that solidarity is a necessity for a satisfying life” and therefore CD “must be animated by the pursuit of solidarity and agency” (2004, p. 14). The purpose and method are implicit in these value premises. Bhattacharyya sees three emergent principles coming from these theoretical parameters: self-help, felt needs, and participation. The tools and techniques of community development are to be chosen accordingly.

Using the Bhattacharyyan CD lens, I interpret the work of the approximately 45 Kumaoni community workers as community development. Still, to say that there is a unified approach across these CWs is difficult. As repeated throughout this work, the shared identity as Kumaoni CWs makes up only a subset of the identities and meaning structures that are co-constitutive of each CW’s practice.

Bhattacharyya is not afraid to cull the roles of avowed community developers and this is certainly one possible interpretation of the outcome if his conceptualization is applied to Kumaon. It is not so much that what he writes is against what the CWs of CHEA, GRASSROOTS, or SUDHA are trying to do; but that the means by which they try cannot be uniformly placed into a yes or no dichotomy in regards to the pursuit of solidarity and agency. That is to say, by Bhattacharyya’s definition, a Kumaoni CW is at times doing community development and at times not. However, Bhattacharyya’s aim is
not create a dichotomous typology, but rather to insist on an explicit teleological vision. Teleological theories are as much future aspiration as they are current description. By those standards, the important analytical question for Kumaoni CWs is not whether they are doing community development at every moment; but are the value premise, purpose, and method of Kumaoni CWs in line with that of a solidarity- and agency-based conceptualization of CD?

This brings an interesting and challenging question into focus regarding the locus of community development. That is, who or what “does” community development?

Taking CHEA as an example, one may fairly question whether the pursuit of solidarity and agency should lay with the institution, the leadership, the community members, other stakeholders, staff, or funders? An “all of the above” answer would surely be ideal, but that sort of agreement of purpose and method is rarely the norm in such groups. Assuming divergent views and goals, by which person or persons’ aspirations should CHEA be judged? Practical questions of ethics and practice arise depending on how one answers this question. For instance, in order for solidarity and agency to be pursued, can an NGO accept funding from a funder who arguably is damaging solidarity and agency in another setting? Or, can a group who is pursuing solidarity and agency partner with others who are less committed to the principles of self-help, felt needs, and participation? At what point is the teleological vision too distorted by the practical decisions of those involved to continue to be called the pursuit of solidarity and agency? Must the teleological vision be perfectly met to be considered meaningful or important?
Bhattacharyya’s implied prescription is for purpose and method to lead the choice of technique and tool. For many Kumaoni CWs, this is a difficult pattern to which to always adhere. Often, resource gatekeepers, who have developed tools and techniques in spaces away from the community, make the use of those tools and techniques a condition of funding. In a community experiencing scarcity, the temptation (if not the felt need) is to accept the techniques and tools of outside funders or interests regardless of their relationship to local purpose and preferred method. The question for many avowed community developers is not “what techniques and tools do our purpose and method suggest?”, but rather, “how can I use the dictated techniques and tools to recapitulate the avowed purpose and methods?” Such a task can at times be simple. Other times, using the techniques and tools as defined by a distant purpose and method in order to meet funding requirements proves too time consuming to also formulate how to meet local teleological visions. Organizational survival may dictate tools and techniques to CW’s. The choice to secure resources for organizational survival at the potential cost of drifting purpose and method may feel unavoidable, but it is nonetheless a choice.

If one interprets the work of Kumaoni community workers to be community development, as I have done here, it is interesting to consider what the process of identity construction, knowledge production and communication, and ideological reproduction can reveal about the Kumaoni CWs’ pursuit of relationships increasingly characterized by solidarity and agency. In other words, what is the teleological vision being constructed and communicated by those engaged by this study? Having offered the above empirical context and explained the ways in which I understand the communicative process to be organized, a tentative summary of the shared teleological vision of Kumaoni community
workers can be offered. In line with Bhattacharyya’s description of such a vision; the purpose, premise, method, and tools and techniques of this shared vision are described below.

**A Teleological Vision for Kumaon**

In response to the avowed felt needs of villagers in the central Indian Himalaya; *Kumaoni CWs’ purpose is to facilitate a prosperous, healthy, and sustainable livelihood opportunity for the people of Kumaon*. Toward this purpose, Kumaoni CWs hold a value premise: *The people of Kumaon should be able to maintain their desired ways of living with ever improving self-sufficiency, but should also foster a greater respect for women and for the conservation of natural resources*. This value premise maintains a Bhattacharyyan pursuit of increased agency while also containing fragments of Gandhian and Nehruvian ideology (e.g., inclusion of women, conservation, and self-sufficiency).

Kumaoni CWs mobilize their purpose and value premise through the methods of *education, modernization, and honesty*. Each of these methods involves a practical element of participation thereby reflecting Bhattacharyya’s (2004) third principle for practice (i.e. felt needs, self-help, and participation). Through the implementation of these methods, Kumaoni CWs construct their identities and reproduce the fragments of ideology at work in their sense-making process. To operationalize their methods, Kumaoni workers use tools and techniques including *exposure visits, technology transfers, processes for organizational transparency, and facilitation of self-help groups*. Together, the above purpose, premise, methods, and tools and techniques make up the
teleological vision of Kumaoni community workers that is co-constitutive of their construction of a shared identity and (partial) interpretation of the world.

If this interpretation is taken to be the teleological vision of Kumaoni CWs, how should it be evaluated?

*The Moment of Community Development*

Behrang Foroughi (2016) has observed that community happens only a ‘moment’ at a time. That is, the sense of solidarity, to use Bhattacharyya’s (2004) term, is a sense that comes and goes. Each minute, hour, and day of our lives is animated by varying degrees of attention or presence to our shared identities and codes for conduct. Moore (2003) seems to be suggesting something similar when he asks, “How might one think of community as process, with shifting sedimentations, rather than as an assumed social and territorial entity?” (p. 188). In a similar reflection, Mary Lou Kownacki (2002) has described the work of peace building as the pursuit of the nonviolent moment. Many others could be noted (see e.g., Block, 2009; Hustedde, 1998; Lederach, 2005; Ledwith & Springett, 2010; Westoby & Dowling, 2013). There seems to be some agreement among practitioners and scholars that the vision to which a teleological theory aspires are best thought of using metaphors of time (moments of community, peace, dialogue) rather than only metaphors of place (utopia).

This is an important insight for an outside observer or an inside participant seeking to evaluate the quality of the teleological vision of Kumaoni community workers. Rather than ask whether Kumaoni CWs are ever, for instance, paternalistic or manipulative in their projects, programs, and interventions; one should ask whether there
are a series of ‘moments’ in which relationships are increasingly characterized by solidarity and agency. If, on the other hand, an evaluator judges the quality of the teleological vision and its associated practices on whether it ever fails to be embodied, no teleological theory will ever be said to be of quality. It seems only fair that an evaluator search for ‘moments of community’ ever more often strung together where the espoused vision is embodied with increasing depth, and, between which, there is an ever-lessening gap. Seen this way, the work of Kumaoni CWs can be released from an impossible dichotomous evaluation (good/bad; right/wrong; oppressive/liberating) and considered on the basis of the nuanced struggles, successes, and failures that characterize social transformation. And, this evaluative lens for ‘moments of community development’ is better reflective of the dynamic, iterative processes of identity construction, collective action, and ideological reproduction.
Chapter 9

CONCLUSIONS

The opportunity to reflect upon my own process of identity construction during this study was one from which I have benefitted. It is also an important aspect of systematic sense-making in interpretive research design. That reflective process can be seen throughout this work, but a bit more reflection is appropriate as I conclude. This chapter offers three areas of reflection. First, I reflect on my own meaning structures and identity avowal/disavowals. Then, I assert one last time the importance and value of interpretive research design in context for the study of community work. Finally, I offer a brief reflection on the relationship between theory and practice.

My Own Meaning Structures

A person who knows me will likely see plenty of familiar philosophical presuppositions, value premises, and processes of knowledge construction and communication in this work. I am keenly aware of many of those things and no doubt blind to many more. For instance, my disavowal of the identity ‘scientist’ has been present with me throughout this process. While I see the university and research as a wonderful vocational home for science, I also see it as a wonderful home for processes of inquiry and ways of knowing that are not necessarily best described as science. Theology, philosophy, art, and many of the humanities can be given scholarly attention without scientific precepts. In fact, I would not describe my bachelors of science and masters of arts degrees as primarily scientific degrees. To me, a B.S. over a B.A. simply meant that I took an extra math and science class when I could no longer continue my study of Arabic
after a move to Bend, Oregon. While method and systematic study were a part of my M.A., there was no discussion of science or scientific method.

The avowal side of this dialectic has been the identity of a ‘scholar’. I see myself as using logic, reason, argument, reflection, and systematic inquiry to try and gain understanding of the world around me. That I see this as separate from scientific endeavors and concerns is related to the pre-coded meaning structures from which I draw. Hopefully I have gained mutual intelligibility with my epistemic other through this process of knowledge construction and communication.

This inquiry has also challenged me to rethink what it means to be a ‘helper’ in the context of community work. As this study notes, the internal tensions within the hearts and minds of those who pursue a more peaceful and just world are complex and dynamic. Being with the community workers of Kumaon who participated in this project challenged me to ask a number of difficult questions, the answers to which have consequences for my own teleological theories: *What makes a ‘helper’ paternalistic? Is ‘capacity-building’ somehow inherently elitist or condescending? Is helping structurally unequal in all cases? Is outside intervention always an intrusion upon another’s agency?* These questions, while not necessarily new, have been brought into greater relief during this inquiry and I feel that my own ‘moments’ of peace with the world are increasingly common because of this reflection.

It seems that the metaphors that we help by are as important as I suspected they might be, but in ways I had not conceptualized prior to this study. It is my continued belief that the desire to help, how we come to know what it is to help, and how we choose to help are questions that need further reflection and systematic study. Examining
meaning structures, such as dialectic identity metaphors, to better understand the internal workings of people who seek to ‘help’ another is a promising way to deepen our understanding of this widely shared desire.

*The Metaphors We Help By*

Understanding the metaphors we help by is of great importance to the creation of a more just and peaceful world. As I have shown in this study, the meaning structures one calls upon to interpret the world one encounters will contribute to, among other things, the process of individuation, the reduction of personal and collective uncertainty, reproduction of ideology, the creation of moral imperatives, and the construction of philosophies of change. For an outsider, this complex process of meaning-making is best understood through *in situ*, prolonged study using interpretive research design in order to make sense of the context and contingencies at work in the process of knowledge creation and communication.

It is my hope that this study demonstrates the value of context-based, in-depth inquiry to understand the nuanced processes at work in a helper-helped relationship. I believe it is too easy to offer universalized accounts of the psychological norms at work across culture, time, and place, which ignore significant differences in the construction of identity, knowledge, and practices. Rather, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the kinds of meaning structures community workers may draw from as they choose to create helper-helped relationships. For anyone interested in the nature, quality, or transformation of helper-helped relationships, it is my hope that this study will...
illuminate the complex nature of these relationships, their context-dependent character, and offer an example of contextual, *in situ* inquiry as a worthwhile and fruitful endeavor.

Furthermore, as leadership development, helping professions, service learning, and other pedagogies of community-facing work proliferate in universities, nonprofit, and NGO programming, more attention must be paid to these basic questions of sense-making. As this work suggests the inadequacy of focus upon tools and techniques as the location for transformative reflection; funders, researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers should give attention to purposes, value premises, and methodology that animate the sense-making behind community work. This will require not only the re-capitulation of messy human meaning-making to scholarly work, but the support of gatekeepers in academic administration, funding agencies, and publishing houses.

*The Relationship Between Theory and Practice*

It is my conclusion that theory and practice, while distinct, are co-constitutive no matter their formality, complexity, or scope. There is no theory completely divorced from human experience. Likewise, there is no practice completely divorced from theory. How is this so? Theory, taken broadly as the explanation of a situation or process, can only be conceived of by utilizing meaning structures and metaphors to make intelligible the knowledge a theory claims to hold. In so doing, theory is conceived using interpretations of interpretations. There is no knowledge divorced from meaning structures. Practice, taken broadly as an action with some amount of mindfulness regarding expected outcomes, relies on meaning structures to construct expectations and direct action. Mindless or unconscious action would not be practice but some other kind of thing.
Practice implies intentionality and intentionality implies sense-making. Without meaning structures, no sense-making takes place and no intentions can be constructed.

The point here is not that theory and action are the same, but that they are intimately related. In the helper-helped relationship that is so central to community work, no act of helping is without theory (i.e. expectations related to explanations), no matter how haphazard or ill-informed an observer might judge it. And, no theory of helping is intelligible apart from the meaning structures available to us in the communicative process. The most basic process of knowledge construction and communication is no different whether undertaken by highly, formally educated academic theorists or the most novice practitioner with no formal education.

What can be different is the access to diverse and multiple meaning structures upon which each person (whether theoretician or practitioner) can draw to make sense of their encounters and experiences. Agency and structure are each important in the mobilization of meaning structures to make sense of the world and respond to those meanings and messages. Furthermore, it is important for those working for community transformation to critically reflect, personally and collectively, on the mental horizons placed upon what is possible, natural, and inevitable. This kind of boundary work is the place where paradigms shift and innovation is sparked. It is the place where agency can redefine structure and transform the metaphors we help by.

In this way, the academic-practitioner divide is perhaps overstated to the detriment of community transformation. The avowed divide seems to describe more about the preferred readings than the actual process of knowledge construction and communication. As Hall (1973/2006) argued, symmetrical knowledge may be beyond our
reach, but degrees of intelligibility between knowers can be increased. In the pursuit of community transformation, avowed theorists and practitioners are wise to spend more time reflecting on the meaning structures from which they draw to make sense of the world, and those of their epistemic other.
Literature Cited


109


APPENDIX A

OTHER SOURCES OF REVELATION


