

## Studying Sociology in the 1970s

### An interview with Jack Katz

*The following text is the full transcript of an interview with Jack Katz, conducted by Alexandra Bidet, Carole Gayet-Viaud and Erwan le Méner, on September 26<sup>th</sup> 2011 in Paris.*

**Books&Ideas :** First you studied law, then sociology. How did you become a sociologist?

**Jack Katz:** When I went to law school, I had been thinking about doing studies in sociology. But it was more of a commitment; I sensed that it was more of a commitment to start in sociology. I would be burning bridges, as we say, limiting opportunities; so I started law school.

Law school is a three-year program. But somewhere in the second year it was clear to me that I wanted to do sociology. But I enjoyed law school, I learned a lot in law school and it probably has affected me a great deal. This was also a program... During the summer in my second year I went to Madison, Wisconsin, they had a program on social science and law, and some very important people were there: Mark Galanter, Lawrence Friedman who became a very well known law professor at Stanford, he was a law professor there at that time. Galanter became a very important person in law-and-society studies. Well a whole series of people were there. There were important historians, sociologists, primarily anthropologists, and that gave me a chance primarily to read a lot of sociology. The course classes were good but it was a transition time; so, I had done sociology reading before, but that summer committed me I think. By the way, this was the summer of 1968. And actually there was a French woman that was part of the group, who had just come out of the May Demonstrations, and this is probably indicative that I was doing something that was far outside of the political action. I mean, she had made the commitment to come before May otherwise she probably would've stayed in France to continue to mobilize. But it was a rather academic thing to do.

In any case, I read Howie Becker's *Outsiders* which is a wonderfully simple book and very easy to get into. And my thought was: I wish I had done this. It really fit to my way of thinking. And also I started to realize who I had been since I was self-conscious of myself as a personality, as somebody who looks at interaction. When I was an adolescent I was always looking at how people shape – now my language would be informed by Goffman – how they present themselves to others. I had other ways of talking about this and colloquial terms as an adolescent, but what people are putting on, that is, the

artificialities, and I think it's probably common to self-consciousness as an adolescent. But I was probably intensely focused on this kind of interaction to an unusual degree. And then I learned what it was actually called in academic terms to do this kind of study. And I did actually in college read – majored in sociology but I never heard the name Erving Goffman. The faculty I was exposed to was Parsonian and anthropological comparative, and it was a good training, but it did not tell me how to identify myself within the ways people were working or what would be most relevant. So I learned that that summer.

And I finished law school, which again I enjoyed. Some of the questions you've asked about influence, I can say that one of the influences from that law school Ronald Coase was there. I don't know if you know Ronald Coase but he's an economist. Basically he got a Nobel Prize for writing two articles. And I was in classes with him, more in his lectures than his entire course. There were in other faculties. And Chicago was known for this influence in economics and of course it is still known this way. But the law school had picked this up. And I actually use his article "The Problem of social cost"<sup>1</sup> in graduate courses now to show the connection with the analysis of social process that Becker does. If you look at what Becker does in his work on deviance or his work on art, he is always showing that what is seen to be caused by a single person or role or a single agency is a collective product. And that the moral judgment, either negative in deviance or positive in art, that attributes something pathologically bad or something charismatic to the person or particular school, that the moral judgment is hiding a broader social interaction process. And that's basically what Coase is saying in his work on the problem of social cost. You know, the railroad goes through the farmer's fields, a spark comes off, the field burns, the farmer sues the railroad. And it comes up in law school because the question is, how do you figure out the damages, who should pay? And Coase is saying that they're both causing the event, it's not the – the moral judgment looks at the railroad. But in a sense, the social scientific judgment says, well, if the farmer wasn't farming there, if he wasn't farming what he's farming there – crops at a certain value, planted at a certain time, etc. – this wouldn't have happened. And so it's very, in a way, apolitical. Of course Coase and Chicago are identified with the right and Becker, maybe, identified with the left, with his positions against the criminalization of drugs and other things considered deviant, but actually it's the same point and it's to me an apolitical point.

It's a very important point that – I think I sensed that there was something to say that was outside of moral ideology, whether on the left or the right. And I think that appealed to me. There are things in my family background that resonate with – and it's probably irrelevant here and it's probably too personal, it's not embarrassing but not relevant – that resonated with me in particular. There's an apolitical intellectual approach that contributes something that, all of a sudden, makes people think in a very different way. That it's the people creating the laws that make things criminal, they're creating the deviance. That it is the farmer, who is the victim initially, as people usually would see it, who is as much responsible as is the railroad. So it de-centers the analysis from a moral judgment to what seems to me a sociological or an economic side, straightforward and scientific. It gets you into this very complex world of causality.

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<sup>1</sup>R. H. Coase, « The Problem of Social Cost », *Journal of Law and Economics*, 3, octobre 1960, p. 1-44.

So, that influence in law school plus reading Becker and other interactionists helped give me an orientation, as I already had the desire to start sociology training but I think that kind of gave me an angle and made me understand that in working in this way I would be within a context that is already ongoing; it's not from the moon.

**Books&Ideas : After Law School you shifted to the study of sociology. Who influenced you at that time, back in the 1970 ?**

**Jack Katz :** So I went to post-graduate school, PhD school at Northwestern. I was living in Chicago and for personal reasons I was committed to staying in the Chicago-area. The University of Chicago, which has a very important sociology department, was anathema for me at the time for political reasons. There were student protests against the war and they were throwing students out, and the only work I ever did as a lawyer was to defend students from getting thrown out of the university for protests. And that department was considered as very authoritarian – and I just know that with my personality I wouldn't last. I would get into too much trouble.

Becker was at Northwestern so that was really very attractive. Other people I was reading, other interactionists were also around – basically I just went through Becker's footnotes and went through Goffman's footnotes. You know, through Goffman I would maybe pick up Kenneth Burke – a literary critic that you wouldn't pick up from sociology textbooks. But basically like a lot of students, I just read footnotes and I said, ok, how are these people coming to their perspectives, what are they drawing on, and what worlds are they in.

I don't know when I read what exactly. I can't date it, but by the time I got into graduate school I was reading very broadly, everything interactionist and things somewhat phenomenological. Becker was a very strong influence in graduate school. Actually, Rémi Clignet was also an influence. He has retired near Nanterre, I saw him recently– I don't know if you've ever heard of him, but he's a French guy who taught at Northwestern. I TAed for him and he used novels by Gide, and I thought, "Oh, this is cool"; and it was very existential, pushing a businessman off of a train on the spur of the moment. It was probably something at the back of my mind for *Seductions of Crime*<sup>2</sup>, you know, that there is an impulse you want to follow and materialize. But Clignet was a minor influence because he worked quantitatively.

But Kitsuse, John Kitsuse, was a very important influence and a good friend. I mean things were very informal at that department at that time. People would hang around the coffee room and the faculty would come in there. Becker would look like a student. He would wear T-shirts with grungy people depicted in cartoons, with a legend like, "Hey kids, let's fuck the state" or something like that. Because he had written about marijuana he attracted a lot of people who were doing drugs in class. We had a class in deviance and...was Becker the teacher? I don't remember who the teacher was – maybe Kitsuse – when a student came in naked, and he sat down completely naked in the middle of us, and we knew that this is his way of getting the paper so we refused to react. We just

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<sup>2</sup> J. Katz, *Seductions of Crime. Moral And Sensual Attractions In Doing Evil*, New York: Basic Books, 1988.

totally normalized the whole thing, but it was the early seventies and it was an atmosphere that went well with the times. The faculty atmosphere went well with the times.

There was a lack of distance. Kitsuse was a great teacher but also kind of a friend. And I learned a lot from him just through how he lived his ideas and his life and the kind of continuity in his personality<sup>3</sup>. He died a few years ago unfortunately. But he had worked with Cicourel. Cicourel had been at Northwestern for a bit. And that was a tie to ethnomethodology, which was also a tie to phenomenology.

Kitsuse wouldn't talk about bracketing, he wouldn't talk in the language of Husserl or classic phenomenologists, but he would talk in colloquial ways about the same things. He would talk about people laying identities on to others, and one of his early studies was on how students in a college dorm came to understand that a roommate was homosexual. But for him, it was a study of how they were laying that on, so it was a, quote, "labeling", which became a kind of phrase in sociology. But in effect, that was the way that sociology picked up a phenomenological influence that the philosophers might talk of as bracketing. You know, suspending belief and looking at how this version of reality is constructed. John Kitsuse would smuggle in manuscript pages from Harold Garfinkel that were not supposed to be disseminated but, you know... It was some symposium at Indiana where one famous phrase was "there is no bottom to this ship". In other words, people kept looking for the firmness "where is the firmness?" you know. You just get on this ship; there is no bottom on this ship.

So through Becker, I got more grounding in the history of interaction. Everett Hughes' sociology work, or rather Hughes was Becker's mentor, he was his direct connection to Robert Park. Hughes had been a student of Park. And Hughes was a wonderful teacher, I mean, I never met him but my colleague Bob Emerson studied with him at Brandeis because Hughes went to – I don't know the order – but he went to Brandeis and then to Montreal after he retired from Chicago. So that was very much the continuity with the Chicago tradition I was picking up. In a way, I feel now a responsibility to try to give to students a sense of that tradition because I acquired it naturally. I felt like, ok, I understand these progressions. I understand context. I am not just reading something out of the blue, and I think as time goes on more history of thought builds up, more history of work, and it's harder and harder to do that. And I had the advantage of being generations after the origins, but in a kind of chain of continuity.

And through Kitsuse and his contact with Cicourel, they did a study on the tracking of students at schools. It was a kind of ethnomethodology study of suspending belief in different capacities of students – and examining how did the schools sort them out and then reinforce those groupings. And this dovetailed with what Becker was doing, labeling in classrooms, you know, as Becker's work was being expanded to classrooms and education. So it was very compatible.

I don't know if I've ever written this up, but I was at Kitsuse's house once, and it was a time when professors would invite students over and it would just be informal stuff and

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<sup>3</sup> J. Katz, « John Kitsuse : A Sociologist in Everyday Life », *The American Sociologist*, 40, p. 36-37.

he was a great cook. He influenced me as a cook. He is Japanese but he did Chinese cooking, fantastic. But he was repotting a plant while we were talking and I remember seeing him go through or seeing as a series of stages of involvement in this little course of activity. And that to me was a phenomenological theme. It's not just what you are doing that merits attention; it's how much you are into it and how much the environment gets into you. So it's a theme about embodying the environment and the environment taking you up. So before you start, you know that it's going to be a bit messy so you put off starting so that there is a kind of inertia stage. And then you pull the plant out and, as Becker would say, you're committed. Now what are you going to do? You can't stand up and stop now. Then you get into the next stage and Kitsuse, who was kind of histrionic, he was kind of mannered in many ways, he would be patting it around so that he would be spending more time making it perfect that he needed to. So that became a kind of involvement where you get into the emergent motivations, the emergent attractions, the emergent interests. That's the third stage and then is a sort of second form of inertia where you don't want to get out of it because you know... So you stay into it too long. In any case, watching him, interacting with him, and knowing him, I probably learned a phenomenological perspective in combination with the reading that stuck with me, that worked for me better than just reading.

At the same time, I hadn't chosen Northwestern for this reason, but it had a lot of interesting supplementary influences towards phenomenology. The dean happened to be a guy who had done his own work on Simmel. I was offered a job there and I interviewed with him and talked about his book on Simmel, which is a great thing to do if you are going for a job – to talk to the dean about a book he has written in your field, and he was quite happy about that. Then there was this great bookstore called Great Expectations, which specialized in existentialism and phenomenology and Northwestern University Press was the press in the States publishing translations of commentaries on phenomenology and existentialism. So you guys don't need to know that because you have your own sources here, but if you are an English reader, you know that Northwestern series, and people like Hubert Dreyfus, who was a philosophy professor at Berkeley, John O'Neill, and there was a lot on Merleau-Ponty; I guess they did *The Visible and the Invisible*. Anyway, so I was reading that stuff by hanging out at the bookstore and sensing the convergences. And wanting to see where Garfinkel and Cicourel – where were they getting this stuff? Where are Berger and Luckmann getting this stuff? You know, because in any case I always wanted to go underneath or behind the people I was meeting, the contemporaries, to see how they were spinning and turning and changing and what are their influences. So those were two main influences: the existentialist and the phenomenologist coming in, in a very compatible way. I can't really judge what was going on in other campuses but I did have the sense that I was in the best place if you wanted to follow these influences, this was like the best place to be.

### **Books&Ideas : How you were trained in fieldwork?**

**Jack Katz:** So the most practical response – Howie Becker taught a fieldwork course and you went out and did field notes. I sat in a hippie bookstore not far from where I lived in an old German area of Chicago that became a kind of mixed hippie place and the study was terribly boring. I never did anything with it and I always reassure my students when

they are doing field notes but it's not going anything publishable. That's what I did so don't worry about it. Or at least I can't make you feel guilty about it because I didn't do anything with this study. And, I mean, Becker would read these notes and he had a lot to do at that time, when I think of it, what was going on in his career and in his life, he was publishing a lot of stuff, he was professionally very active, helping people as an editor, working in multiple fields already. He was already doing photography back then so he was already into art as well as deviance, as well as education. Multiple fields he was keeping up with as well as writing theory. But he would take the time to read our field notes – a class of about a dozen. And I mean the agony he must have gone through from the side of reading field notes! It just makes me cringe to think of anybody reading my field notes. But he did and I learned from that. There were a lot of elementary mistakes that a lot of people make in field notes, and I am sure I made them all and that was an important base.

And then doing the dissertation – I had a choice between doing a Kitsuse-like dissertation or doing a Becker-like dissertation. And the Kitsuse-like dissertation would have been like looking at families with kids who had been labeled deviant, like in some way retarded, and families with kids who had been labeled in some way charismatic, because I think I was already writing about that kind of binary. And Kitsuse was responsive to that as well. So there was that choice and then, because I went to law school, and I knew a lot of people who were becoming what was called poverty lawyers, lawyers representing poor people. And I knew from personal contacts that there was a new, quote, “radical” organization that would be more militant and demanding on part of the poor that was merging with an organization that had provided legal assistance to the poor since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century which was very passive, and basically helped people to pay their debts instead of questioning collection practices and interest rates and so forth; they would help people fulfill their obligations. And so this seemed like an interesting study of careers and of organizations, but more than that it was something historically new, that I thought I had distinctively good access to because I went to law school. I didn't know a lot about the relevant law, but I probably wouldn't be as intimidated as somebody who didn't go to law school. That's how I thought about it. And I knew the people and I thought I could get access. The Kitsuse project would have been a more deductive, top-down study and I thought it was a much bigger risk. And probably I would've had to meet a bunch of people I didn't know, so it was just intimidating on a personal level, I mean, calling up families of kids who are supposed to be geniuses and getting all those relationships – but I thought it was a much higher risk. And I do feel that it was a smart choice in retrospect.

Very early on, I saw this study on Poor People's Lawyers<sup>4</sup> as basically a study of three processes at different levels of granularity. I had understood from the interaction reading I had been doing, that I should find some practice distinctive to this work that reoccurs again and again and again, to study a process of which there are many incidents. So that became how these lawyers would deal with the clients in their office, and specifically how they would get them out of the office; because these people weren't paying. So they could come in – there were poor people who would come in and they weren't necessarily well organized, nobody had a computer those days but they didn't even have ledger

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<sup>4</sup> J. Katz, *Poor People's Lawyers in Transition*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1982.

books. So they would come in with a shopping bag of little slips of paper – some having to do with their landlord-tenant problem, of course poor people have all kinds of problems not just one problem. It's not like you're working for a corporation that wants to issue a new stock on the exchange and wants you to just work on that. They would come in with a divorce or problems with their kids getting expelled out of school, with debts to retail stores, an eviction notice – and it's all in this bag. And they are not paying and they also don't have a job to go to, many of them, so they could be there forever. You could basically spend your life with one client. And so the question is: how do they get them out? So that is a recurrent event and it's a process – now I would use the term sequential process, at the time I don't think I would use that term.

So there was that, and then there was the second level process of the careers of the lawyers. There was a lot of, quote, “burn-out” among the young lawyers who would come in and within a few months leave. A tremendous turnover for the young lawyers. For the older lawyers, that were working for this 19<sup>th</sup> century organization, they would stay their whole work life. So the career meanings were obviously very different from the same kind of environment, seemingly because poor people weren't choosing whether to go to the older lawyers or the younger lawyers. They were just coming in and getting sorted out almost randomly in effect.

So then I got into looking at the stages, I did interviews on the stages of the career and observations. So there's one form of data and one sequential mini or micro question about dealing with the clients in the office and in particular getting them out of the office. There is a meso kind of question of careers of lawyers and I did interviews and I just went over time. And I had a handful of questions and I would look down once in a while to convince the people that I was doing an interview and that it was worth their time, even though I wasn't following what was written down. But I would basically do what Becker says: you start off by asking “how did you get here?”, and then you say “and then what happened?”, “and then what happened?”... So there's only two questions you need to know. So basically I followed that in my interviewing. That is – chronology is real. Biography is real, you know that. Anything else might be artificial. Any other question you come in with, you might be assuming something that might not be true of that world, but people do live in time. Things happen before other things, things happen after other things. There are transitions from one thing to the next. That is true of all of social life. So basically, following that, I did, as the second aspect of the study, those careers.

Then I did a third level, which was the macro, the history of the organization. Now I found not a lot of information, but enough to make a good story that basically this type of institution was started in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in Chicago and in New York by German Jews who had come in from Germany after the 1848 Revolution, and they were very affluent and very progressive. They introduced this type of institution, which was then picked up by Protestant churches, primarily, and their charitable support, and so it took on changed meanings. But you can find the early records and the early cases, and you can see how the problems of the poor were the same or had changed in some regards. So the third aspect was seeing this time in history within an evolution or a change over time.

And I thought that that ended up being very good training, working on those three levels, and I think I always have probably in different projects. Currently, the urban project I am

doing has more macro-historical than anything before, but it really was a taste I had of this kind of work and an appreciation of how you can be misled if you don't go back in time. It's got context that the people themselves who you're talking to are not aware of. They don't know that what happened in 1970 was shaped by what was happening in 1880 and how the things they took for granted were set up in certain ways. And so you have what I call a certain warrant, you have something to say that other people around you don't know, basically. That's what we are trying to do; we are trying to tell people stuff that they don't already know. And a good warrant in ethnography is to include history, because a lot of people just know the history of yesterday or what they need to know immediately.

**Books&Ideas: During your dissertation, you also completed your first articles about deviance.**

**Jack Katz:** I think that was out of course work and not so much related to the dissertation. That was a couple of articles because both Becker and Kitsuse had written, quote, "labeling" articles on deviance, questioning the reality of deviance and seeing it as a construction, a political imposition, a historically contingent way of looking at things. The take I had in the first article was kind of a lawyer-like, a logical argument against Becker's table of four kinds of categories. You know, there's deviance that is not detected, it's secret. There's deviance that is labeled and doesn't occur. And then the other two. But for those first two, the question is how does that reconcile with the claim that Becker makes that deviance is what's called deviance? How can you say that there is deviance when it hasn't been labeled? At the same time, Mel Pollner wrote an article and he later became an ethnomethodological colleague of mine at UCLA. Independent of anything he was aware of or I was aware of, he was writing the same article and seeing the same issue. He put it differently; he put it in a more ethnomethodological way. I put it in a more argumentative lawyer-like, logic problem. And it was probably a little bit of an oedipal thing with Becker, because anybody who influences me I always worry about, you know, where is the falseness in this god? So I always look for the foundations. He was very gracious about it, actually. I mean he referred to that paper in his second edition of this book. So it didn't mess our relationship up. It just came out of me looking at the foundations of the faculty's work.

And then the second one, the "Deviance and Charisma" paper<sup>5</sup>, came out of working with Kitsuse more and seeing that logically, if deviance is artificially constructed, so is charisma, which was also something sociologists have been interested in. So I wondered, can you simply invert the pattern? And so it was a Simmel kind of dualistic dialectic, that was what I think of Simmel was doing, a sort of dialectic between the labeler and the label of deviance-charisma, and then there is a dualism to let you flip that over and you see a double dialectic. That always forms a neat dialectic for writing a paper. And so that's how that came up. That was pre-dissertation really. And I recommend to graduate students to do something like that, that doesn't require getting your own data, so you can start to write and get a name because it takes a long time to get your own data and to write from things that you're discovering and other people are not, so you don't have the

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<sup>5</sup> J. Katz, « Deviance, Charisma, and Rule-Defined Behavior », *Social Problems*, 20(2), 1972, p. 188-202.



categories already for your discoveries. If you can write a sort of theory paper, that is a helpful way to keep the gears going while you are taking more time to do the original research.

**Books&Ideas: How did you start working on deviance after your dissertation?**

**Jack Katz:** I started fieldwork about deviance before I was in school. So what happened was, when I started to teach at UCLA – and I put in a personal note here, when I was in graduate school, Bob Emerson saw my paper on deviance. He was an associate professor at UCLA and a student of Hughes, but I didn't know who he was. He wrote me a letter out of the blue, a letter of appreciation for the article. So this was a very kind act, a very gratuitous act that you know he wasn't getting anything for. And when I went on the job market, I went to UCLA and, not in having understood anything about UCLA. I grew up in the East and UCLA was just football teams, I had no idea of anything intellectual: I just thought it was girls in short skirts cheering for the football team and big guys playing. And there's plenty of that, but there was also a great sociology department and I got to meet these folks. Mel Pollner was already at UCLA.

And I came to UCLA and of course I had to start to teach and I didn't have anything prepared to teach, but to get paid you have to teach. So there was work that I had done on deviance and so a course on crime was something that I could teach. So I put together a course on crime and through putting together the course on crime, I basically developed the materials for the book *Seductions of Crime*. I basically looked to what was happening when people were doing crime – in effect I looked to the dependent variable. Everybody was always looking at the independent variables, different theories of crime and everybody was always teaching, you know, it's differential association or it's something Freudian or it's stratification or inequalities or racism or the ecology of the city, all the independent variables. But nobody ever looked at what he was you're trying to explain, which seemed to me, that's not the way you should do science.

You go to look at the thing and then you see from there what possible explanations there are, and you test out different explanations. So I just thought I would pick up everything I could that was the closest descriptions of people doing criminal activity. And then, quickly, it became the activities that they themselves regarded as criminal because I was already very sensitive to the labeling thing, that I wasn't going to look at people smoking marijuana, which wasn't necessarily deviant to them, but to people who were robbing banks or killing people and then waiting for the police because they knew they did something wrong, or to be bad-asses, that is to say, creating a persona of deviance so that other people would be in fear and in dread and intimidated.

Some of that I knew before school from growing up in different places. One of the experiences I had when I was in college, during summers, I was a waiter in the Catskills, which was a resort area that is famous among Jews since the Second World War. The headwaiter would recruit waiters and busboys from the Lower Eastside. He had been a boxer and he would recruit delinquent kids, and the judges would let them not go to jail if they would come and work at the hotel with this guy. So I was with these guys housed in what were abandoned horse-barns and, from living with these guys, I was clued in. For example, the first day I roomed with a guy whose nickname was Dillinger. Dillinger was

a glorification of Dillinger of the 1920s, right? And it was also a reference to sexual prowess, I realized sometime later. So it was a good thing to say, it was sexy and it was positive for him to be associated with an image of deviance.

But this guy, he clued me in, he was my roommate and he clued me in the first day. He said “What’s going to happen is somebody is going to come up to you, and they are going to ask you to borrow some money. It’s not going to be a lot of money; you’re going to have the money. It’s going to be easy and you’re going to want to give it to them because you don’t know people here. Don’t give them the money. Because if you give them the money, this is the beginning of the summer, they will never pay you back, and every time you see them, they will be humiliating you”. I mean, he didn’t quite put it in these terms, but it will be, as I came to see it, in effect, a constant robbery. And they will do it in part to show others that they are doing it. It was almost like something going on in prison, like immediately when the naïve person comes in and doesn’t know the game, and it just taps your weakness. And then the next day, a guy comes up to me and asks to borrow a couple dollars or something insignificant, which I had, but when he comes to ask me, I don’t know if Irving told me to say this or I figured it out on my own, but I remember saying “No I don’t have it, I was going to ask if you could lend me some money”. So that immunized me from that gimmick, but there were plenty of others going on. And that was like “Ways of the Badass”<sup>6</sup> when I saw – I mean, the guy didn’t need the money, it wasn’t for the money. It was so rich, I mean, deviance is such a powerful maker of status, of rewarding things that it’s too attractive not to use in all kinds of ways. And it wasn’t like, these people were being falsely – they might have been falsely accused of all kinds of things, but there were deviant things they had done that they wanted to be known for.

And then other people I knew when I grew up. I grew up in a place where there was one high school for the entire community. The community was rich people, middle people and poor people including mafia connected Italians guys, some of whom I knew, and black guys from the poor section and then the middle-class black guys or Puerto-Ricans. And around the school and around youth life, there were all kinds of games being played. You know “What’re ya looking at?” kind of stuff and if you made eye contact with somebody, what I call “eye-fucking”, this stuff was going on all the time with males and adolescents. And I realized that this would be useful, but I didn’t want to describe my experience 15 years prior, so I found something in the literature where somebody had described a similar thing, but I knew it was true. I knew the social process was true.

So coming to UCLA, having to teach a course, not knowing what to teach, never having thought of myself as a teacher, finding that nobody had taken a look at all this material out there, biographies, autobiographies, close-up observations, you know, con men. Stuff that Goffman, I saw that Goffman used this stuff. That told me that you can use this stuff, this is legitimate. That’s great, that’s one of the great things about Goffman. Now, he would use *White-Jacket* by Melville, you know Melville’s book about social life on a commercial maritime ship. So it was legitimate; so that helped develop the project.

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<sup>6</sup> J. Katz, « Ways of the Badass », chapter 3 in *Seductions of crime. Moral And Sensual Attractions In Doing Evil*, New York: Basic Books, 1988.

## Writing on White-Collar Crime & Concerted Ignorance

### **Books&Ideas : As a fellow and then a post-doc at Yale, what spurred your interest in white-collar crime ?**

**Jack Katz:** What happened is, I am at Northwestern and I've collected the data for my dissertation, now I could stay there. I had taken the courses I wanted to take in a couple of years and the atmosphere and the message that I understood was "Get out there and do your stuff". If you've taken courses already, and I had already been through law school, and I was reading a lot anyway. And there weren't a lot of additional courses I wanted to take. So there was an opportunity, because I had been in law school I could qualify for a Law and Society fellowship at Yale that was set up by Stan Wheeler, who was a sociologist who worked on prisons who had spent a little bit of time at Chicago, who knew Becker, was very influenced by Becker, and he ran this fellowship program so there was an opportunity to go there. And it was a great bunch of people. I recommend to my American students – I don't know how it works here – that before they start a dissertation and before they start teaching, to go to another university research environment, in order to realize the blinders you have from the local gods. All of a sudden, there are other gods of a very different nature and in a different place and your gods look much smaller.

But that got me to Yale and money came up to do research on white-collar crime – that was Watergate time, this was the mid-seventies, post-Watergate. You know, people in the Yale professors' offices, they had all of Nixon's appointees in a photograph on the wall and they would cross out each one as they got indicted or went to prison or something. I think it was an amazing time. So the federal government was willing then to look at white-collar crimes and Yale law school has connections, like Harvard might have, but almost no other place, to power, to centers of power. So I could get into the federal prosecutor's office in Brooklyn through those connections. The head of that office was basically an academic type who went to Harvard and came there on a kind of strange fluke of the political chaos of the times – I won't get into it because it requires too much local history to explain. Now, he's a federal judge. And basically, he welcomed me because he thought that I was going to do a biography of him and that would help him become a federal judge, because somebody had done a biography of a famous prosecutor in Manhattan, right across the river there was another prosecutor's office; and that had helped make that guy famous.

So I unfortunately never wrote that biography for him, but I went into that world of prosecuting white-collar crime and that's where the white-collar crime writing came out of. The connections were also from there. I interviewed Rudy Giuliani when he was in Washington; because he had gone from New York to there, I could get into all these circles of people. Basically, you could get into any door. It was like you are in the club. A colleague of mine Ken Mann, who got a law degree from Berkeley and was getting a sociology degree from Yale, he got into the top defense firm for white-collar defendants. I mean, beyond the CIA, this was the most difficult place to get into. And his access was based on a recommendation from Arthur Lyman, who was a famous lawyer at the time and he was the chief counsel in other investigations in Washington, and Lyman just said "Let the guy in, let the kid in". And then there the guy is in. I think he even got paid, because he was a lawyer, to do the research. They just added it in bills to the clients. And

he did a wonderful book on defending white-collar crime, talking about information control and the game, and I don't know, people now might look at what's going on with Chirac (in 2011) and all these other investigations – I hope somebody might do a comparative analysis about how the system works and why it takes so many years and the delay strategies.

Being in Yale helped me get into the prosecutor's office. From there I wrote a couple of things that were articles. I never wrote the book and I am not happy about that, but I think it's useful to say why I never wrote the book. The story became enormous and immense, and also I never got the sense that I was there enough. I was commuting on a train from New Haven to Brooklyn, and the whole story was of the politics of Brooklyn, the connection of organized crime to politics on Long Island, what's called the political machine in Brooklyn, and the effort of this political organization to control prosecutions. Things were happening like the prosecutors would call up an investigating journalist from a newspaper and tell him "This is happening", and of course they'd never get mentioned in it, but I knew enough was going on there.

I also found in some of the files people I grew up with that were getting prosecuted. In fact one guy who was prosecuted in a union Mafia prosecution, and he was the biggest jerk, everyone knew he was a big fat stupid guy. So he was taking the fall, he was the guy that they could get. I knew this was fantastic stuff, but I wasn't around enough to have enough confidence that I would get it right. I would have had to be there, and in the meantime, I was writing other things and I didn't make the commitment to move to Brooklyn. It would have taken that commitment, a really full-fledged – so it was more like looking at files and interviewing.

And from there I wrote a piece on what's called the social movement against white-collar crime<sup>7</sup>. The movement is hard to start, but once it starts it has self-continuing dynamics, although it doesn't go on forever. I wrote a second paper that basically was the outline for an essay on bias<sup>8</sup>, which is about two different errors in social life: the error of not doing something you should, in other words, the error in effect of being criticized for passivity because you didn't do something; and the error of being criticized for something you do do. And if you do something positively you get criticized for it. Life in many circumstances is a choice between these two errors. What's the risk if I am inactive, you know, it's the kind of the existentialist thing that has been picked up not just by philosophy, but if you are inactive there is responsibility there, social responsibility, more in some circumstances than others. It turns out that the difference between a white-collar crime and what you can call street crime is that, if you don't prosecute street crime, you can get criticized because there is a dead body or there is a victim clearly and then a complainant. I am simplifying, but generally. In white-collar crime, if you don't prosecute, nobody will know about it usually because only you have found this stuff. But if you do prosecute, the people you are prosecuting will charge you with political bias, they will have all kinds of legal resources. It's white-collar crime, particularly when it is

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<sup>7</sup> J. Katz, « Social Movement Against White-Collar Crime », in E. Bittner, S. Messinger (Eds.), *Criminology Review Yearbook*, vol. 2, Veberly Hills: Sage, 1980, p. 161-184.

<sup>8</sup> J. Katz, « Hunting for Bias », in P. Ewick, R. A. Kagan, A. Sarat (Eds.), *Social Science, Social Policy, and the Law*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1999, p 210-257.

paper crime like fraud and misrepresentation, but with DSK [Dominique Strauss-Kahn] you can see this. I think he even said the inequality of resources and the difference it makes in the US system is profound. I don't know about here.

So that became a study of how the bias works. The interesting thing is, if you start prosecuting white-collar, if you come over the hump basically, the resistance to start a case – because it's so easy not to start it, if you do start it, then it becomes easier and easier to do the next case. Because you get into records and then other people will get vulnerable and they will start to give you evidence and then to save themselves, they will give you more, and it spills and spills and spills because so much is hidden, and you build up your stature with the public, with the people who fund you, with the newspapers, so you get more protection. So there is this kind of social movement dynamic that comes out of the differential bias.

Then there was a lot of folk sociology going on because people in the system understood this. There's one guy I interviewed who was in Washington doing tax work and he was seeing around the country – because to do federal tax work around the country you get cases streaming in from all over the country – and he would see the offices where there was a weak prosecutor's office but plenty of corruption, you know, through tax work you see all kinds of evil things, all kinds of deviant things. From Al Capone to business cheating and international bribery for example. These various forms of crime are also tax crimes, because you don't report it correctly. So he would go around to the office, where he thought there was a lot of important work to be done, but nobody was doing it, and he would make his name. And then he came to LA and he made big cases of illegal campaign contributions, and then he became a federal judge. And that was the root.

It wasn't just Watergate. I remember what struck me was the fact that the charisma of all the institutions started to pale, started to fade. All institutions which had been protected by respect, now started to get questioned. Even, I remember the Merchant Marine Academy – this is a training place for people not in the military armed forces but the marine part that deals with bringing commercial things around. They found that the guys in the dorms were smoking marijuana. This becomes a big criminal case in the wake of Watergate. Otherwise nobody had paid attention. A lot of things that Catholic priests were doing, that Orthodox Jews were doing by taking federal money in Brooklyn and misapplying it. All these things that were like sacred cows, that you couldn't touch before, all of a sudden, now you could. I never developed that as much as I wanted but there is a tremendously interesting sociology going on there, how the charisma of institutions is interconnected. There is something, I don't know, Durkheimian, something very profound about that. I don't know if it works that way in France now with all these investigations going on – all sorts. Down to, this (Balladur) thing in Pakistan that ends up like a murder case, basically. I mean you've got sex, you've got murder, you've got dirty money, you've got personal money, you've got bags of money, I mean, in the US this is fantastic but I don't know if it spills over or if it's more isolated in France. This is a fabulous comparative study possibility. Anyway, that was the white-collar work<sup>9</sup>. Then I

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<sup>9</sup> J. Katz, « Legality and Equality: Plea Bargaining in the Prosecution of White-Collar and Common Crimes », *Law and Society*, 13, 1979, p. 431-459.

had to leave the East so I couldn't really continue that. It's the kind of work that is really hard to do at a distance.

**Books&Ideas: At that time you also wrote about concerted ignorance in organizations, could you explain this notion?**

**Jack Katz:** Yes I also did a paper on concerted ignorance, probably by that time<sup>10</sup>. Arlene Daniels was another important faculty member at Northwestern who was another kind of interactionist type of person. She was editing the journal *Social Problems* and they had a special 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue coming up, so she asked me to write something for it. And this was the kind of stuff that over time comes to shape your work as people start to make requests. So I put together that paper which was about how deviance in organizations is covered up<sup>11</sup>. Merton took some interest in this and he contacted me, because it was about how all organizations, in order to have a collective identity, do in one sense or another cover-up. That's the basic work of an organization, covering up.

And so whenever any investigation starts, there is all kinds of stuff that's hidden. All sorts of hidden things will start to fall out; whenever there is an economic downturn somebody will go bankrupt, you know, you're going to find tons of stuff. And then people will take the sort of moral attitude, "Oh it went bankrupt because they were deviant or because they were cheaters". But that's a bias in the way you find out about the events that makes it appear that way. As long as everybody is making money, nobody knows that Madoff was doing a pyramid scheme, a Ponzi scheme. It's only when it collapses that you see that this has been going on for years.

And the concerted ignorance, if somebody would do a study of that it would be sociologically revealing in all kinds of ways. The interesting sociological point is not about Madoff himself but about all the other people, who didn't ask questions, about all the ways in which they had signs but did not ask questions. That is the interesting sociology in it. So this is concerted ignorance: how we collectively, in concert and together through direct and indirect interaction often, don't ask questions.

I remember one of these things, I was in Yale at the time and I was using a typewriter where, in those years if you made mistakes there was a little liquid thing that you would whiteout over and then type over the thing. And I remember looking at this thing and on the back of it, if you take the label off and send it in, you get a nice pair of nylon stockings. And I thought: of course, these are usually female secretaries who are using these things and so they are pitching to them. And basically they are trying to corrupt them. They are trying to give them a little bit of a bribe to order this product. So this stuff is all over the place. Even as I am writing the paper, I am correcting my mistakes with this thing that's showing me another example of it – well maybe somebody will take advantage of all these scandals now. But what about France? Do you think anybody will do that? I mean journalists will, but anybody in academic life? There are so many books published in France, I am sure journalists will. And they publish them within a week! I

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<sup>10</sup> J. Katz, « Concerted Ignorance. The Social Construction of Cover-Up », *Urban Life*, 3, p. 295-316.

<sup>11</sup> J. Katz, « Cover-Up dans Collective Integrity: On the Natural Antagonisms of Authority Internal and External to Organizations », *Social Problems*, 25, p. 3-17.

saw a book out on DSK and his wife within months of the thing and it's out there. So journalists will do it but will academics pick it up or is it this kind of thing where it's too close to cases in the news or suspect because it won't look professional enough? I don't know.

### **Exploring the criminal mind**

#### **Books&Ideas: Your investigation on crime questions the personal experience of the criminal, why choosing such an angle?**

**Jack Katz:** Well first of all, the key shift is the de-centering that I talked about, the move from a moral judgment position, taken either from Coase's work or from Becker's work, (I am just taking these two as representatives of parallel work by many other people). What that does is make you suspect of any conventional view of a social problem. For a researcher – the first formulations of any problem you work with, where do those first formulations come from? – they come from popular culture, from political culture. They come from morally motivated ways of cutting into life and picking out a certain segment and saying this has coherence or has homogeneous, consistent meaning. And if you start to question that first formulation, literally you start to sense that, as long as you keep using it, you don't know what you are talking about. You don't know until you look at the stuff. You're just borrowing somebody else's "glosses," as some people (ethnomethodologists, conversation analysts) might call it. First formulations are morally motivated or politically motivated glosses.

If you start to study crime by looking at statistics on crime, those statistics use categories that lump together all sorts of things that when you look into them, you find out they are very, very different in their meaning to the people involved, and they shouldn't have much in common; there is no reason to think they have much in common. I always think about the example: of people stealing hubcaps. I don't know if cars have hubcaps anymore. They used to. Do you know what those are? The metal things that go on the side of a wheel of a car, and they have like the insignia of the car. Well, you can steal a hubcap, take it to an auto shop and they will sell it to people whose hubcaps have been stolen. So there is a market for that, and you can create the market for it by stealing hubcaps. Or you can steal it because you have a hole in the roof and you need something so that the water doesn't come in. Or you can steal it because somebody dares you to steal it. Or you can steal it because you want to hit somebody on the head with something hard. Or you can steal it because you are making a collection, not for resale. And so on, and so on... But the law would look at that as the same act, theft, and the statistics would say it's all the same thing. But as soon as you get to the meaning to the person doing it, there is no reason to think that the person stealing it to bring it to an auto shop has the same motivation as the person who wants to stop water from coming into their house, or somebody whose own hubcap was stolen and has to replace the hubcap now. I should qualify: there is, actually, something in common and that is the practicality of doing it. The praxis of it might have something in common; although, even in that respect, the

professional or experienced thief probably knows better how to do it than the amateur. So even that might not have anything in common.

But to me it was astonishing that sociology had always been studying theft or murder or robbery or crime in general, as if this were all the same thing, to all these people doing it. But it didn't make any sense to me that that would be a good way of finding an explanation. From Durkheim on, everybody was doing that. And they are still doing it.

**Books&Ideas: Could we say that there is a reframing of words Becker studied about deviance? You're asking "what do I do when I am engaged when committing a crime?", and not "what is happening when somebody is committing a crime?"**

**Jack Katz:** There is a reframing from Becker and this kind of gets to the difference. I get more phenomenological than Becker. And one way the difference came up was when I published this paper that was critical of Becker<sup>12</sup>. I remember I was summarizing my argument in a discussion with Becker. I don't know if I put this in the paper – but I was talking to him about the example of accusing somebody for being a witch, which was something that happened in American history that Kai Erikson had written about. Now I asked Becker, how could you characterize as deviant witches that hadn't been caught? Are they secret deviants? In his scheme, it was a problem, since according to him, in order to say something was deviant, the analyst had to wait for a labeling by a repressive authority. But his "secret deviance" category implied the analyst could separately assert deviance before official reactions that labeled it that way; indeed the word "reaction" implies deviance preexists the labeling. Becker wanted to embrace Erikson's study, that there were deviants in the form of witches in 17<sup>th</sup> century American history, so the example was not off the wall. I pressed him with the argument that to apply his scheme, to study the Puritans picking some people to label as witches but not others, leaving some as secret deviants.... you'd have to believe in witchery. He would have wanted to say there were secret witches and false accusations of witchery; but how could an analyst know if, as he had written, the analyst had to wait for political authority to label witches, at which point the deviance would not be 'secret.' And how can somebody be falsely accused of deviance, when the deviance is being a witch? That implies someone could be accurately accused of being a witch. So, I pressed him: "how can you ask us, as researchers, to determine someone is a witch?" And he said to me "Well, how do you know they aren't witches?". And that, I couldn't respond to. That really got me. I knew I had a point, but I did not yet have the language for it.

And then I said to myself, yes, there are people who act like witches before they are labeled as such. There are people who are doing deviance, whether or not they've been caught; there is something out there, at least in the sense that people understand themselves as witches, follow practices that they understand are what witches do, before anyone labels them, or even if no one labels them as a witch. Becker wasn't going to look at that. He was just going to look at the labeling of it. But in fact, there are people who

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<sup>12</sup> J. Katz, «Jazz in Social Interaction: Personal Creativity, Collective Constraint, and Motivational Explanation in the Social Thought of Howard S. Becker», *Symbolic Interaction*, 17(3), 1994, p. 253-279.



are witches, in that sense that, they believe in that, people who have created a kind of magic and for whom the magic works. And so, that was part of the motivation for going beyond Becker and seeing, well, what's the next step here. And that's looking at the reality of deviant experience; the motivations behind doing it are distinctive. How people conjure up deviance themselves; how they convince themselves they are deviant.

So it was a combination of taking the next step beyond this symbolic interaction view, and also just a perspective on science, a sense that I had about science as naturalism, that you should start with the phenomenon. And this phenomenon, eventually I found that the thing to say about it is, that there are moral and sensorial attractions that lead people to embrace deviance. But at the start, I didn't really have it in my head that this explanation was the most important thing to say. For me the most important thing was to build a study of crime from the phenomenon itself, the thing to explain, not the explanation.

**Books&Ideas: In *Seduction of Crime*, you used all sorts of data, including biographical references, fiction, etc. Isn't this a strange way to explore the criminal mind?**

**Jack Katz:** Yeah and for that reason I think I used my own observations, the scenes I have been in, although I sometimes represented them in other materials. And I had – in “Sneaky Thrills”<sup>13</sup> – I used reports that I had students write up that were autobiographical. But yeah, I tried to use multiple and different kinds of biographical references because just to use fiction, for example, or journalism, wouldn't be satisfactory. So it was kind of using some forms of evidence to cure the weaknesses in other forms of evidence, which have their own problems. Instead of using just one form.

But really to me the key was to start with the thing you're trying to explain. And the great thing about crime was that the phenomenon is short-lived each time. Except for white-collar crime, which is an ongoing crime because once you do a white-collar crime you have to keep covering it up so it's part of you. Whatever Ballardur might have done 15 years ago, he's been doing for 15 years since. I mean, this stuff goes on and on and on.

But what you do when you rob or you murder somebody, there is a before when it doesn't happen, the time it does happen and then there is an after when it's not happening anymore, and that's a great structure for testing explanations, causal explanations, and in qualitative work, finding phenomena with that temporal structure is very important.

And when I talk to my quantitative colleagues who are very concerned about causal methods and causal inference, that is the most effective thing I have ever thought to say. That when you can take the phenomena before and after you get, quote, “control” on it in a way. I mean the various things that sociology considers important in the person's biography don't change in that time – where they were born, their race, or their ethnicity, the occupational status of their parents holds constant, something else changes right there. When you do qualitative work, you can't answer the usual sampling bias questions the way the quantitative people do. You don't have a consistently structured sample, you

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<sup>13</sup> J. Katz, « Sneaky Thrills », Chapter 2 in *Seductions of Crime. Moral And Sensual Attractions In Doing Evil*, New York: Basic Books, 1988.

aren't using methods in a controlled way that can answer to reliability on interpretations; but you do have this variation and that's why it's extremely – that's why looking at the dependent variables, seeing it rising and declining in a short period of time is interesting... both crime and emotions – the way I studied them anyway – have that.

In *Seductions of Crime*, I am not studying the kinds of crimes that go on forever like white-collar crime. That is important to study but not part of that book. And when I am studying emotions I am not studying schizophrenia that starts in a double bind during childhood, like with a schizophrenogenic mother. The kinds of things that Gregory Bateson and others would have gotten into, RD Laing or Freud. I am not studying these lifelong emotions. Instead I study emotions that emerge and decline repeatedly, rapidly. And so basically the data is structured to give lots of resources for testing hypotheses and causal hypotheses.

### **Books&Ideas: Could you tell us what is Righteous Slaughter?**

**Jack Katz:** Righteous slaughter<sup>14</sup> is a way to define crime that permits explanation. It is an alternative to trying to describe “murder,” which is a legal category that really represents the interests and concerns of the victim and the public identifying with the victim. If someone is dead because somebody shot him, it might not matter to his/her relatives or to the government whether it was a gang or a robbery or if somebody tried to rob the as a stranger, or even if it was a neighbor who was mad that he parked his car in his driveway. All of these things happen. From the judge's standpoint, the judge representing the community, and from the perspective of the family of the victim, there's this loss and so those emotions, those meanings lump together all of these events – the gang event, the neighbor event, the robbery event – that have very different etiologies, very different processes of creation. So why think that you're going to find a common explanation for all these things? I mean, there might be to some extent a way to put them all together but it's very rough. So the first point about Righteous Slaughter is that it is not a study about, quote, “murder”. It is a study about a certain kind of aggressive violence that sometimes ends in death.

That points to another thing the law does. The law makes a big difference between attacks where the victim dies and attacks where the victim doesn't die. But why should we think that that would make any difference to the causation of it? Whether someone dies or not is often the question of how far the victim is from the hospital, how long it takes emergency services to arrive, whether the shot was accurate or inaccurate, where a stab hit the body, it has nothing to do with a difference in causation. But those, attempts and completed crimes, get separated out in legal categories and given very different treatment which is again, ... I have a phrase that I use a lot with students. I haven't written it up yet, but I will one day: Culture lies. Anything you find in culture is misrepresenting; culture's job is to lie. Our clothes lie, they change our form. In very systematic ways, in very interesting ways, they change the form of our body. That's what culture is about. It's showing but it's hiding at the same time. It hides what your body is really like; it makes us more uniform. Even if it isn't a police uniform or a military

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<sup>14</sup> J. Katz, « Righteous Slaughter », Chapter 1 in *Seductions of Crime. Moral And Sensual Attractions In Doing Evil*, New York: Basic Books, 1988.

uniform, it makes us more uniform than all the vagaries of our body. And it also kind of hides the continuity in our being. And chops us up, so you know, I have a shirt and pants, now I have two parts of my body. But if I am not wearing any clothes and I am sculpted or somebody draws the way I am holding my head connected to the angle of my foot on the ground, the pressure, a good artist will show that in the naked body, but that is hidden. So continuities are broken up, but that is the job of clothing to hide as well as to show. Well all culture does that.

So the first thing when you get to study crime is to realize that whatever culture says a crime is, no, don't accept that definition of the problem. It's not going to work out for you; you're not going to be able to explain that. You're going to find lots of cases that have nothing in common, that are associated with this, and you won't see the commonalities until you redefine it from, in a sense, the inside. So you study not hubcap theft, but hubcap theft for resale. Just like Lindesmith did in studying opiate addiction. He had to redefine it not just as somebody who used it again and again, but people who use it to satisfy a craving, a certain kind. So that becomes an analytic induction move, where you redefine the phenomenon from the inside, from the actor's point of view, and it becomes more phenomenological, so you come up with unique terms like "Righteous Slaughter."

### **Books&Ideas : So what is this actor's point of view in Righteous Slaughter?**

**Jack Katz:** What they are doing from moment to moment and the stages that are apparent to them are turning points...

### **Books&Ideas: But do you really use the term turning point or would you prefer something like transformation or transmutation?**

**Jack Katz:** It's fair. It's a kind of continuum. There are – you know I was thinking about the transformation from humiliation to rage. There is a little segment there, so a distinctive dynamic – each of these crimes that I deal with in that book has a distinctive kind of dynamic, a series of stages. And I don't know if turning point or a transformation is the best description, but the fact that in your humiliation, you see the practical outlines of rage. The outlines are about the practices that will be responsive to humiliation and extinguish it in rage. So you are being put down, you will rise up. Throwing water on somebody is a way of shaming them in lots and lots of cultures. It kind of dissolves your identity; and so in rage you burn it off. Transformations, if not turning points.

Now one of the things that happened in studying crime, that I hadn't worked out before, was a tripartite analysis that I've continued in the emotions book and then in the other micro studies that I do and that I advise students on all the time. And the first part of the tripartite structure is the interaction process, which is more or less what is covered traditionally – the interaction between the victim and the offender, as had been previously studied by David Luckenbill and other people. That interaction process includes such matters as, that the offender's action is contingent on the victim being present, versus running away; and it's also important in a lot of assaults that bystanders are there to witness the humiliation so that the person can't brush off the humiliation. It's going to stay in their minds. Someone can say offending things to you, but they will go away

unless they do something that insures you will remember. So, the relevance of others being present – you might think that would reduce the chance of violence but actually, in bars and party situations, it increases it.

So there is an interaction aspect, but also a practical aspect and that is that you actually have to do practical activities in the world, and there are contingencies and stages for doing that – I think it was from Lonnie Athens – from his work I saw events where a little guy in prison is humiliated by a big guy and he is going to attack him, but then he realizes at some point that he can't do it. The guy is too big and so then he figures out a way of not attacking. So this is a second condition, the practical ability to do the crime. Crimes are actions people are trying to construct; if they are not able to, if they come to understand they will not be successful, the emotion goes away. It's kind of like, on the road, people getting angry and driving. Somebody's cut you off and now you go in front of them and do the same thing to them and you look in the rearview mirror, and if you see them looking at you then you can give them the finger, but if they don't look at you then there's no point in giving the finger because you are just giving it to yourself. And the emotion fades. I mean, who's going to see it? So there are practical aspects that are related to the interaction.

But then there's also a kind of a dynamic of transcendence in which the moment is being blown up to have a special meaning. And that's the humiliation-to-rage part of the explanation; that's the part that has to be described more aesthetically and more sensually, that you almost have to go to cartoons for, and that comes up again and again on the work on emotions. And that tripartite structure of explanation – I started to realize that explanation required each of these three inquiries, so I went through those three questions when looking at data on each type of crime. And that just led me to look for certain things: ok what is the praxis here? What are the practical stages and practical challenges of Sneaky Thrill? If you are going to shoplift, what are the stages? Because you aren't just going to grab the thing, you also have to get out of the store. You have to grab it, you have to hide it, you have to get out of the store, and you have to talk to somebody about it, that's the fun of it. It's a series of stages you have to do. And the third is the distinctively aesthetic/sensual aspect of committing a crime (or any type of behavior). I call it aesthetics/sensual because this is a facet of conduct that occurs beyond culture, beyond what language, in an already recognized way, grabs – it is often grabbed by culture indirectly, in metaphor, and it is understood in an embodied way more than anything the person says or can say about the conduct in the language of discursive reasoning.

### **Books&Ideas : In what sense do you speak of super moral crimes ?**

**Jack Katz:** Here you are in a situation where you are humiliated, you're ashamed. You found out that your wife is cheating on you and everybody knows about it. You're called a little punk or you're eating your BBQ and the guy next to you just takes these from you without asking. You're nothing; you're just treated as a non-being, as a non-person as Goffman might say. Well, what is that? You're thrown out of the community. You're treated as a non-person; you're treated as not part of the human community. So the logical response to that is to say "I am" and to show that you are, you defend the whole community so you say "OK I am defending the importance of loyalty in marriage", "I am

defending property rights”. “Somebody is taking my BBQ” or “parking in my driveway without permission”. It’s not just because it just bothers me, it’s like the whole system of our society would fall down if people didn’t respect property rights, so I get my shotgun and I shoot the guy.

But without that meaning of defending the community, without that moral meaning, you don’t do the attack. Invoking the communally recognized morality of your action, honoring your action in that way, is necessary to unleash and sustain it. You aren’t really responding to logic in the sense of anticipating how others will see and evaluate your action. You’re seduced by the moral imagery. And because you give that special meaning to your aggression.... that’s why people usually just wait around for the police, because they are not anti-morality. They are being super moral in a sense, in this kind of violence.

There are many different types of violence and murder that are not like this, but Righteous Slaughter is maybe the most common historically and across time and space. So the moral aspect of the explanation, of the process of launching an enraged attacked, refers to how the person identifies with the community, upholds what he takes as generally accepted values. That is how the aggression makes sense to him, because he has sensed he was thrown out of the community as kind of amoral being, some being not worthy of respect, and so he attaches himself to respectability in an extreme way.

This guy is not telling the rest of the story, he’s not saying the words to himself. This is being lived through the rage itself, through the rising up of self-righteousness as a righting of your body. When you think of somebody being self-righteous, they are looking down and, you know, trumpeting their condemnations to others and to a whole community so you’re in a world of historically transcendent values. All fathers should be respected, so I hit this kid until the kid dies. And yes, it’s experienced and done in and through the body, not through discursive reason, not through a conversation with the self, much less with others.

That answers one of the questions that often comes up: where does the phenomenology come in, why do you (the analyst) need the phenomenology? Because culture won’t get to this, the way things are framed by others won’t get to this. You have to get to the embodiment of these understandings and to study the embodiment. Understanding that really led me to the emotions studies, to the use of videotape in some of them, and other ways of trying to get access to patterns that people were creating and responding to in and through their bodies.

**Books&Ideas: You talked a lot about the importance of getting to the embodiment. What consequences does it have on your way of doing research and fieldwork?**

**Jack Katz:** Now when I am looking at any problem, particularly micro, but also in urban studies now that I am doing, I’m looking at these three inquiries basically. There are three parts of any moment of social life: there is an interaction aspect, there is a praxis or practical aspect and there is an understanding of the transcendent meaning of the moment that’s being done in a hidden way.

So I look for data on each of those three dimensions. I think it is useful to separate them analytically (I don't know that in reality, if there are clear seams in our experience between these things). It makes a difference because what social science usually does is: it studies either what is situationally specific, what is visible within the situation, what you can observe, what you can record within the situation; or it studies matters that transcend the situation, which are background variables, which are through interviews. Things that happened earlier; where you were born. The kind of statistic demographical stuff. It is very rare to combine the two.

People talk about macro and micro and qualitative and quantitative as being a division we should overcome. To me, the big practical challenge is to overcome the split between studying situation specific phenomena and transcendent phenomena. And embodiment is the way that the transcendent is lived constantly, because the body is what transcends all the situations we are in.

You know, what I am teaching in graduate courses now is about the organization of every day life, topics that come out of that. But one of the questions I pose is: from the time you wake up to the time you go to sleep, are you ever outside of a social situation? The social situation you are in can usually be identified with a narrative – your getting out of bed is a series of stages. And you have to complete it. You don't start it, usually, without completing it. You brush your teeth as a series of stages. Putting your clothes on, also.

I have an exercise where people try to describe putting on their shoes. Then I have them put on the shoes of the person next to them. And when you do that, you see that there are a series of stages that have to be negotiated. If you are putting the shoes on a client in a store, if you are putting the shoes on a child, if you are putting shoes on somebody who is handicapped, that is something you maybe are self-conscious about. We are usually not self-conscious about the stages of putting our own shoes on, but if you try to put shoes on someone else, they are going to offer to do parts of the narrative. They will extend their foot, or at some later stage, they will put their foot down on the floor into the shoe to complete the fit. There is a negotiation of who is going to do what parts, and in that negotiation you can see the narrative structuring. The praxis is narratively structured.

So we are in narratively structured situations almost continuously. There are very few parts of your life where you can't answer the question: what are you doing by doing that? Which is the simple question I ask when talking about crime or about emotions, that is the first question I ask when looking at the praxis: What are you trying to do? What are you trying to accomplish? The crime book comes out to different answers than usual because it asks that question and because the simple, usual answer does not work: people aren't really trying to get material gain. And it gets to what they are really concerned about. What are they trying to do? Just to answer that is the research challenge. To answer the "what" to get to the "how," to the stages of what are they trying to do.

### **Books&Ideas: So how do you use video as a tool?**

**Jack Katz:** Our research techniques have become very sophisticated about studying the actions of a situation, both the interaction and the praxis aspects of it. We have recordings, whether it is a conversation or people working together in a work situation. A

lot of great studies are based on data like that. There is nothing wrong with these studies but because they get so committed to the interaction analysis and the praxis analysis, they don't look at the transcendent issues.

I'm in a department that... I was probably influenced by the people in conversation analysis, and one of the big historical events was Harvey Sacks saying "Record the data, work off of recorded data, because otherwise you are just making it up, it's just cultural lies, glosses; what you think is going on in the conversation, you have no access to it". Its right in front of you, but you can't get any control and have any access to it, descriptively, accurately. That is still a pretty challenging kind of position for people doing discourse analysis, paralinguistic analysis. Ok that's terrific, but the folks who want to record, and work off of recordings get so committed to that, that they won't look that there is life before and after that moment they're recording. And if you rely on recordings only, well, you'll have to record somebody's whole life and spend your whole life looking at their whole life to get the first sense of it, and then, you'll have to have another lifetime to revise it and make your transcription, and you're not going to get there. That's not going to happen.

You need other methods to get to the fact that the actors themselves are aware that this situation is part of a trajectory that goes beyond what is physically observable to others right now, or to yourself right now. You're driving on the highway, and you may wonder: well where are these people going? I can see what they are doing right now; I can see how they are steering and interacting with other drivers. But I can't see where they are going.

Now there are people who study where they are going. There are people who interview drivers to find out – ok, they say, let's take a sample to understand where the drivers are going, in order to control traffic. So we will interview them, you know, when did you get on this highway, at what entrance? When will you get off? Is it part of a business trip, picking up kids from school, shopping or going out to a park, or what? What, what is it? But they won't look at the action of driving, the interaction of driving, the praxis of driving. Because they get trained in the methods that are good for interviewing and sampling to get those interviews and so forth.

And that is a big challenge in our time in research history, I think. To put those two together, the study of situated action and of transcending projects known to the actor, because you don't get to the fullness of the experience and you're going to miss something. You can get the praxis analysis right; you can find interesting things out about interaction. There is nothing wrong with anything that comes up out of any of these different ways of working. But you'll miss something by not seeing the whole, that there is the interrelationship going on of all these things.

The self-reports are not going to give you perhaps what you need. First of all, you know, what I did on that part of the book, the chapter on anger in driving<sup>15</sup>, is I had students interview other people and also report their own experiences, not just as drivers but as

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<sup>15</sup> J. Katz, « Pissed Off in L.A. », *How Emotions Work*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999, p. 18-86.

passengers. And as passengers, they see what the driver is doing without the emotions. The emotions of the driver are very powerful and they affect the driver's ability to recall what has happened, and to report it. But the observer can see the driver doing all these things without the emotions, which is very significant because they aren't embodied by the car, or being embodied by it. Even though they are in the circumstance and in the same interrelation. They are not having the same experience because they don't have their hands on the wheel and their feet on the pedals.

So I realized at some point, looking at these interviews, that the passenger, the observer is a wonderful resource for seeing things that you don't see if you rely on a lot of cases of the drivers' self-reports. And what I at some point would like to write about is the visible unconscious. It's what is invisible to the actor at the time, but is visible to a third-party or on videotape. Or if you go through the experience again yourself with the intent of describing how you've embodied an action... Of if you do interviews, if you make another effort, you create another situation with the person and you interview them on it. And then they can bring to mind things that, at the time, they live emotionally and in their bodies but can't talk about.

### **Emotions & embodiment**

#### **Books&Ideas: So you have to be very imaginative to study emotions.**

**Jack Katz:** So, yes, you have to look for another device and that's why in that series of studies I tried many different forms of data. I tried interviews done by people co-present during the behavior under study, by passengers. I tried self-reports of shame experiences. And I had two or three chapters that were based on data examined on videotape. I didn't do everything on videotape, because I didn't want to – what's the Marxist phrase – make a fetish of videotape. But videotape is an important resource; because it can give a third-party perspective that both parties interacting are not aware of. Or at least, if they are aware of it, they are aware in an unconscious way and could not speak of it, then or later. I wouldn't say they aren't aware of it.

A couple of examples are in the chapter on the guy accused of murder getting interrogated by the police<sup>16</sup>. I was looking at crying – so I was looking at, ok, when is the rise and fall of crying. Exactly, when does it happen; because this interrogation goes on for hours and the guy doesn't cry. Then at a certain specific moment he cries. What's happened there? There is a photo that I grabbed from the video. The accused guy, James – so the police say at some point – the arrested guy has killed a couple of people and when he came to a police stop point he threw the gun off out of the car that he had stolen, that he was driving. He doesn't know that the police got the gun. He is wondering if they have, and they haven't told him. The interview has gone on a long time, so at some point they say, “well you know, we've got the gun in there”. And they form the gun with their finger and they point at a room above his head. And then the guy, James, says “well I

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<sup>16</sup> J. Katz, « Crying in the Whirlpool. A Murder Breaks Down Under Police Interrogation », *How Emotions Work*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999, p. 274-308.



guess I am in the hot seat – I guess I am going to the hot seat now”. So he rises from his position in the hot seat. It’s too hot. He lifts his body from the seat. And then he cries. So he is like dislocated – he is taken out of – “il est mal dans sa peau”. This body that he has created no longer works for him and he is thrown out of it, and he has to get back into a new shell.

But right then, he is in the “hot seat”, which of course is the American slang for getting executed, which used to be an electric chair. It’s not anymore, I don’t think anywhere, but that is still a phrase used. And that is when he senses that he has lost it. Then the crying comes and the crying then is useful because it covers up the pause, it gives him another event to do, but it’s also, he has a lost self, and crying recognizes the loss of self, it melts the self; this is a kind of praxis. So there you really need the videotape to see exactly when that crying occurs and how it is created, not only connected to the metaphor, but connected to the whole strategic thrust of the interrogation where the police have – I don’t know if they have the gun or not, I don’t remember from the case. I actually testified on this guy’s behalf actually at the capital punishment stage, that’s how I got into this. But I don’t recall whether the police found the gun or not, but often they say things like that to get the guy to break down, which he did and then confessed so it worked, whether they had the gun or not.

But at that point, they had been interrogating him for a long time without telling him, without making that statement. So they set him up. They got him really into what I call a practice of verisimilitude. Its not a matter of whether you’re telling the truth or not, you’re doing it with the tone of truth telling. So if you are telling the truth, your talk is going to come easy and smoothly. So he’s telling it with a certain rhythm. So when they say “we’ve got the gun in there”, all of a sudden, he is out of that rhythm and can’t do the verisimilitude anymore. And that leads to the confession. They break down the corporal practice of adding the gloss that what I say is not only a denial, but it’s a truthful denial. Because, you see, an innocent person would just relax and just be telling you things like this way, be relaxed in their chair, be grounded in the world and in the community. After all, what is this business when we are sitting like this. What is the sensual nature of how we usually sit? Well, we are part of the whole and the whole is part of us, and we are naturally part of the whole. We don’t sense a division between where our body ends and where the chair begins. And then, all of a sudden, now I am thrown out.

**Books&Ideas: Could we say that emotions are to recreate a sort of balance, to get back to a social/moral order, or to the community?**

**Jack Katz:** Yes, and you know one of the passages that meant a lot to me was a survivor of one of the death camps, saying that she had witnessed bodies after bodies being pushed into excavations, including her children I think, and saying that for years she couldn’t cry. And when she could finally cry, it was really an advance because she could rejoin, so yes. Finding when people don’t cry, when they might cry, is as revealing, or more revealing as when they fall and they cry. You expect the child to cry. When the child doesn’t cry, that is really trauma. That is, I can’t rejoin the community. But this leads to – I should make really clear the qualification, tis is a certain kind of emotion I am studying. This is not all emotions. This is not paranoia, this is not catatonia. This is not all kinds of schizophrenic conditions, nor all kinds of neurotic conditions. This is not obsessive-

compulsive behavior I am studying. This is not general anxiety I am studying. These are the kinds of things that I can't study because they haven't these data qualities like white collar crime. There are some kinds of crime that I am not studying in that book, like white-collar crime. They don't have the data qualities I need, which is that they rise and fall? There are little metamorphoses, and that is a practical advantage for testing hypotheses, that you've got the before, the after, the control and you see exactly what the contingencies are.

So there is a certain set of emotions that all grow out of what I call a fall. I mean, what others in commenting on the Bible call a fall. I wrote a paper on the social psychology of Adam and Eve where I kind of sum this up. That there is a kind of fall out of Eden, out of a natural being, and being embraced, being a part, and being extensive with the animals and the plants and everything. And you are intertwined, as Merleau-Ponty would say, in that kind of natural, un-self-conscious way. And all of a sudden you are thrown out.

And you know one of the responses literally to a fall – a child falls, an adult falls – you can cry, which does a representation of a broken self, which would already be a step back in, as Goffman would say, by showing embarrassment. You show that you are not so inept socially that you do not recognize a fault – at least you recognize a fault was made, so it's a step back in. So crying, sad crying is a step back in.

If you fall – you could get mad. Why didn't they create an environment that I didn't fall in, you think?– and it's great to see how people differentially respond. I know people who will always say, “Why didn't they fix this!” – I don't know if that's an American thing, but other people will always cry, and then there are people who always laugh. Sometimes, when I work with immigrant laborers, and I do gardening stuff with them, whenever there is a mistake, they laugh at it. And I understand, ok, it's a way of getting back in. It's a way of representing the double body; there is the body in action that I recognize, that this is a body broken out. Or you can be ashamed and you can be uncertain what to do. Those four emotions are what I study and Genesis, the Bible, has shame as the primary reaction to the fall – that shame is primary and towards the end of the book, I kind of debate that. It's not clear to me that shame is more primary than anger is, for example. But one of these four – and I don't know if there is a fifth – but I sort of selected, not in the beginning wittingly but over time this emerged as the four that I could study. And they all seem to have this response of putting yourself back into the community in some way. So it's a certain kind of emotion I am studying in that book, a kind of emotion that more than other types of emotions has an answer that is moral or social, because you are rejoining the community. And it's a response to what could be humiliating.

Just on the videotape, from the whining chapter<sup>17</sup>, another way to make some of these points: the girl Rachel whining in preschool. The video clip shows that the teacher is illustrating how to do the puzzle. Ok, the girl is working at a little puzzle at a desk and she is whining, whining, whining. So the teacher, who first of all says, this is annoying, but if adults are observing her, this is embarrassing, the school shouldn't have whining

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<sup>17</sup> J. Katz, « An episode of whining », chapter 5, *How Emotions Work*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999, p. 229-273.

kids, so there are problems there. The teacher comes over and she shows Rachel how to do the puzzle.

Now in fact, Rachel, who is a smart little girl, knows how to do the puzzle. But she is sitting there whining, she is not engaging, so the teacher takes the puzzle pieces to demonstrate to her how to do it. So the teacher goes like this [raising puzzle pieces and putting them in place] and this is done very histrionically, very slowly, and in silence so as to draw the child's attention, so that there are no distractions. This is the only thing happening. And all of a sudden the whine goes "ehhh" [upward and downward in scale]. Rachel's whine follows the hand motions. And it starts and stops, and its trajectory follows the hand motion. You can see that on the videotape. I may have the clips on the website, but you can see that quite clearly. Before the teacher comes, the whining is irregular. And the teacher comes and basically in whining, the way she whines, she is joining the teacher. Whining is saying negative, I'm not in what is going on here. But by shaping the whine to the hands, she is saying "I am here; I am with you. I am social; I am socially competent". But that sort of thing, you can't see with the naked eye. You can't be sure that that's going on. You can suspect it, but you can see that kind of thing on videotape.

I mean, videotape has its problems. You can trick yourself into seeing relationships, because the camera itself will create certain relationships with the slowed down taping will make things seem interrelated that aren't. It's a great resource, but it's not the only way to do it. Other ways of doing it are through interviews or having observers. But the point is to get data describing something that transcends what the actors themselves can be self-consciously aware of. The teacher and Rachel sense this, that they are together. They sense the togetherness. In fact, the teacher has her arm around, in a way transcending Rachel, and is almost compelling her to togetherness by controlling her body posture. But what they are doing transcends their immediate awareness. It doesn't transcend the time of it, but it transcends what is visible to them. Other aspects of transcendence are time transcendence or space transcendence.

I have a paper, "Emotion's Crucible"<sup>18</sup>, and in that, I do stuff with putting shoes on, and I am drawing there just on self-observation. I start off the paper with an example of college teaching. When you are teaching your seminar, if you are giving a lecture, you are not showing the students how this part today fits into the whole course because you can't. That's why you need a class today. There is a sequence and you're setting it up, or you're trying to set it up, so that first things are done first and other things later. Well you know that. So if a certain segment is going in a way that indicates to you that what you were going to do next week won't work, it doesn't make sense or you're contradicting what you had intended to say, you will know that emotionally. Or if you think "oh what I am saying today gives me many other resources for other sessions than I had realized I had prepared for". "Oh I've done much more preparation than I had realized before". You'll feel that positively. That's all a transcendent time framework that the others present can't see, and you can't focus on it then, because if you do focus on it then, you'll lose your train of thought and won't appear coherent in the segment you're talking about right now.

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<sup>18</sup> J. Katz, « Emotion's Crucible », in D. Spencer, K. Walby, A. Hunt (Eds.), *Emotions Matter. A relational approach to emotions*, Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 2012.

And that's transcendence, which is sometimes an esoteric term that people think refers to spirituality, but no (or also), it's a very practical term. Life transcends this moment, and part of the work of social life is to create boundaries. This is all we're going to do right now. We're not looking at other parts of each other's bodies, no; we're only looking at this part. We're not talking about that other stuff (in our lives that we know the other does not know about). We're not talking now about what I have to do later in the day or what I have to do tomorrow. Because, if I focus on that consciously, I won't be able to keep up my attention coherently with you.

And we're doing a lot like that. Having a conversation with another is in a way locking each other to the boundaries of the moment. Because I talk to you, and as you hear me, you can anticipate, you have to respond. So you can't think about all these things that are in your mind about dinner tonight, and what you're doing next weekend, and how you're going to pay your bills. You have to focus on what I am saying, because otherwise it's embarrassing when it's your turn to respond and you might show that you haven't been paying attention. So we create the barriers for each other. We mutually sustain the boundedness of the situation. So there is situationness, but we know that there is other stuff in our lives. We (or, better, each of us, about self and about other) know that we don't live for what is here, now, and what is visible. We live for then, things happening later, there, things happening simultaneously. I know right now that somebody in my family is – this isn't actually true but just imagine that somebody in my family is having an operation. I know that now but I won't be able to talk about that.

Or things that are happening subtly like with our hand motions and so forth. We have to keep them basically invisible to ourselves. So we're doing that – we are making our own body invisible to ourselves in order to act. We're creating an invisibility to ourselves. But the third party can see that. And the video camera can see that. And in interviews, some of these things, at least time and space things, and you can interview me about. You can ask: "Well is somebody in your family having an operation in the hospital?", you can ask about that. But you have to commit yourself to that.

So here you need theory, I think, or else you don't do it. I live in a world where, on one side of me, are people in offices who do the situation specific work and, on the other side of me, are people who do the transcendence stuff. They'll look at long tracks of history or they'll look at demographic things that measure different parts of people's lives. And it's not micro-macro so much as it is different techniques for setting the situationally specific or situation confined, and the transcendent.

## **Ethnography & Political Relevance**

**Books&Ideas: What is the virtue of ethnography as a method? What is so specific to it?**

**Jack Katz:** I did write a paper called “Ethnography’s Warrants”<sup>19</sup>, where I listed the challenge of ethnography is that basically we are finding out what people live, what they know. Well if they know it, who needs us? It’s already known. People using statistical demographical, historical stuff are looking at things that people don’t know. In your own experience, you can’t tell what’s the proportion of males and females in France now and how is that different from what it was in 1950. I mean, whatever your experience is, you can’t know that. So other types of researchers, they have an answer, they have a warrant in their methods and we don’t.

Well, let’s take the example of studying how somebody teaches sociology at this institution. Well, you know that. So what is the warrant? There has to be some sort of ignorance there in order to justify the study. So I list several worries, things that are treated as scary, deviant, whatever. That’s a big area for ethnographic research because people in society are afraid to go to many places or they misrepresent them. Things that are historically new, like when I did the poverty lawyers, these were new kinds of lawyers and part of the, basically, John F Kennedy and Lyndon B Johnson Democratic administrations, that they were inspiring these kind of new forms of social welfare and social activism. So one warrant is to study something that his historically new.

But for me, the primary virtue or the primary warrant for ethnography is the fact that culture lies. You’ve got to go and find social life and describe it yourself, because it will have been represented to you in a misleading way. That may be a personal thing, but I don’t trust unless I see. I think we have plenty of warnings about that fact that culture has its own reasons for representing/misrepresenting society. Every time something is presented to us, written about, filmed in a movie, talked about in the news, picked up by politicians, they have their own interests. They can distort it and present it via an institution.

And so ethnography has the virtue of giving you a chance of being independent of all these biases. It’s not that you’re immediately going to see the truth, it’s that you don’t have all kinds of barriers to get over to learn something. It’s not like you just open your eyes and see the truth. But it's the fact that culture lies in such elaborate ways, and ethnography is the way of finding out for yourself. Don’t trust anybody. You know, maybe it's a paranoid sociology, basically, that leads me to “I want to find out for myself. I don’t trust it. I want to see”.

**Books&Ideas: At the same time, you talked a lot about your relying on everyday life experience and how we are intertwined with the world...**

**Jack Katz:** Well I think in these three elements – and the interaction theme, that I do take from Blumer – I believe that all social life is done through interaction; that there is no social act that is not an interaction. But I also believe in the ubiquity of praxis. There’s stuff in Marx that also inspires or maybe is consistent with this. That the world is obdurate, it must be worked with, it’s not just that you want to have something and you have it. You have to work through stages of it. And I guess I take the transcendence theme from... I am very inspired by Merleau-Ponty and by the constant flow in the way

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<sup>19</sup> J. Katz, « Ethnography’s Warrants », *Sociological Methods & Research*, 25(4), 1997, p. 391-423.

we are intertwined with the world. We are all a part of the world and the world is part of us.

But I don't know that when I look for the substance of a project, the particular terms I don't get from that. I just get directions of inquiry. They don't tell me what to call these things. I don't get metaphors, you know the metaphors "sneaky thrills" or "whining" or "pissed off" or whatever. They don't come out of these theories. They come out of something people have grabbed out of culture and used as metaphor, but not adopted as a matter to study. And usually these formulations of social patterns to explain are not grasped as a matter that organizes the exercise of power. So the righteous slaughter study – that kind of murder, is not singled out directly by a statute, although it is appreciated by the judges and other people in the system. So these things are sort of colloquially known. They are picked out in fragments; like how you put your shoes on is known by people who make shoes so they make certain innovations, like for kids they put Velcro. So they know about the praxis; how to vary shoes in that way, but they are not doing a whole analysis of it, of explicating it. They are working on it. They are using it as a sort of folk sociology. It is known as a sort of folk sociology but not represented in the way that I think of culture as making a sort of representation to be seen on its own, as politics does or journalism does, or as the media does or the criminal justice system, or any other form of government action does.

### **Books&Ideas: What is the link between ethnography and political consciousness ? Why speaking of three styles of ethnographic methodology ?**

**Jack Katz:** Since I teach ethnography and in the US context, there's been a lot of controversy I guess since Wacquant wrote his essay criticizing Duneier, Anderson and Newman... I found myself in the middle of the arguments that developed because I had good relations with everybody before this thing started. And I still have ok relations with everybody; I haven't broken with anybody. But I was trying to figure out what was going on here and the students kept asking me "So what's going on? Do we have to take a choice?" and I wrote one paper that was published in the *Annals* that was on politics and rhetoric and ethnography<sup>20</sup>. And maybe that's what you're responding to when talking about the different styles of ethnography...

But since then in my teaching, I've worked up another paper that I will put in a book on methods after my Hollywood project. That's called *Three Genres*, and it's less polemical than the *Annals* paper. Actually it's not polemical at all, because it sees virtue in each of the three genres of ethnography. One genre is iconic and a great example is – the street corner studies are iconic. They take a few people, like Elijah Anderson's *On the Corner*, which was his dissertation: it might have had three or five people – that's it. But it's an icon as in religious imagery of a precious little representation, worked elaborately, but in it there's some larger meaning – it's precious. Mitch Duneier's *Sidewalk* study, which, I don't know how well known it is here [in France], but it was a very successful sociology book and also a popular book in the States. Duneier goes along, with these guys who are

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<sup>20</sup> J. Katz, « On the Rhetoric and Politics of Ethnographic Methodology », *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 595, n°1, 2004, p. 280-308.

selling books on a sidewalk in Greenwich village that they picked up at one place or another and so you get to know these people, very vividly. So that's one kind.

Then there is modeling work. There are several different examples of modeling work. There's Radcliffe-Brown's way of working. He would go into some island society that no one had seen before, and he would model the whole society, but there wouldn't be one person named, there wouldn't be one particular person described. It would be all the structures and functions of how the kinship structure works with the economic system works, with the political power system, with the ecology. But nobody is visible. There are no people visible in that work. Another example of modeling is what I think Burawoy is recommending. In his well-known book<sup>21</sup> there are some people visible, but a lot of that work is... basically you do theoretical commentary to fill in a lot of the model. The point is to create a model of micro, macro and meso. I think of Howard Becker's work on art. The genre there is modeling. All the different people coming together. Now there he has lots of people visible but the effort is to show these are all interweaving; so it's a macro portrait, showing a whole that is composed of many different parts. In some of the parts you can see people and in some of them you can't. But it's a different effort than the iconic. I don't think Becker ever did an iconic, but a lot of his students have.

Then there is the comparative analytic genre, which is the kind of stuff I've done, Stefan Timmermans does, Bob Emerson does. This comes out of the Everett Hughes training, and Becker and Glaser and Strauss developed studies in this style. You get lots of incidents, variations on a certain kind of thing happening. A lot of studies in this tradition were studies of people at work. An example is Donald Roy's factory study. He had many incidents describing how guys were, quote unquote, "making out". How much they are producing to reach the required limits and their strategies to do so. And then, you create an analysis that makes sense of all of that, basically through analytic induction.

So these are the three styles and each has a way of being politically progressive, if you want to do that. Each has a way of being conservative, if you want to do that. There is nothing in the style itself that dictates what the political slant is. But each has a different place in the history of investigation in an area of work.

Like when Radcliffe-Brown was doing his work, an anthropologist might be the first person from Europe from the West to go to a society in the Indian Ocean or the South Pacific, to try to chart out the social life. There is a different language and many many things are different from what Europeans knew, so you don't necessarily want a comparative analytical study and you don't want an iconography. You want to understand the whole and the way it fits together – that makes sense to get your orientations. It's also what you need as a colonialist, I suppose, to get control.

You need a lot of information, not just a narrow, comparative analytic study of a given practice.... An example of such a study, from much later on in the history of anthropology, is Charles Frake, doing a study on how to enter into a Yakan which is located on a Muslim island in the Philippines. And the stages they go through before

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<sup>21</sup> M. Burawoy, *Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process under Monopoly Capitalism*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979.

people actually enter a house and the stages they go through as they come inside. There are lots of cases of entering a house that he examines to show the variations. But that wouldn't be the right thing to do in the first study of that society. He draws on a lot of things already known by others created through modeling work.

The iconic work has itself a different kind of... when you want to bring together lots of different relevant themes in the lives of a certain population – you can do that by portraying the lives of people and showing how all these different themes make a difference in their lives. So Mitch Duneier in his *Sidewalk* is showing how the constitutional interpretation of the first amendment makes a difference; how the stationary book vendors' work makes a difference; how Penn Station is set up and the alcoves in it make a difference to the homeless book vendors. How pedestrians' routines in Greenwich Village make a difference. And all these things then become a rich portrait, a way of talking to many different themes that are often kept separate in academic and popular discussion.

So the different genres have a different role, but I don't think one is – I think often people say “oh, well one is more moral or politically correct”. They each have a political use and it's not necessarily left or right.

### **Books&Ideas: Why then have you been critical of M. Burawoy's strategy?**

**Jack Katz:** My problem with M. Burawoy is not so much the modeling he does, it's that he, for political reasons, doesn't consider alternative explanations and look for data that's right around. That's a real haunting problem that I see in the work of a lot of students. Actually, it's a kind of academic sociological Marxism that limits the work that we have to do as researchers; it's meaning should be sought in how it shapes our relations to the means of producing sociological knowledge. That's the value.

He uses a theoretical model to justify not looking at the lives of workers outside the workplace he entered. Those people at his research site live in a community, they have relatives, they have sisters and brothers. If there are other firms that have other management practices, why don't we find out about that?

As I understand it, the factory that he argues was so well managed and effectively induced consent, very close to it. There were others that were on strike; that were having labor disputes. That in fact it was not clear that this management practice really was causally significant to, quote, the “peace” at that factory. It might have been other things.

And the way it comes up is really – a fieldworker puts himself or herself into a site and there's a lot of work to get to know the people, to get access, to get comfortable. A lot of us are not that easy in other settings. We're scholars, we like to be in quiet places. Now we have to be very gregarious. Ok, you've got yourself situated, now you realize that to really understand whether, for example, management techniques are producing compliance by the workers, – and why the workers stay there instead of leaving – maybe I should go and see the neighborhood of the worker and find somebody – a sister or a brother or somebody very similar to them – who doesn't work in the factory I'm studying and see what they are doing in life. Maybe the workers I'm studying just get more money



in their current job than do their brothers elsewhere. Maybe it has nothing to do with the management's practice but is due to the fact that their sisters and brothers can't get a job and when they do get a job it pays half as much. So the management practices really don't matter. That's a reasonable rival hypothesis. It's not necessarily pro-capitalist or more Marxist-critical. That can just be saying that because there is very little employment opportunity elsewhere, management – and for whatever reason management does this, sometimes management does things because they want to appear sophisticated to other management people. There is a lot that management does because – they are not really oriented towards the workers but they are oriented to their own peer group.

So this is the challenge that I face and it comes up because students come up with projects and I want them to go into other settings, to investigate other reasonable hypotheses, and this is the way that people get a political kind of ideology into academia, to justify not doing extra work. And so the result is not serving the larger interest in building knowledge. But it's not a matter of modeling or not modeling. It's a matter of what is reasonable and alternate hypotheses that are not being pursued because a lot of rhetoric is being used.

**Books&Ideas: This has to do with what you called the aristocratic style.**

**Jack Katz:** Yes. Becker, in the *Art Worlds* book<sup>22</sup>, is writing a modeling kind of book. That's at a later point in his career and he is in a different stage of life, of how he will gather facts to write about. What he was doing at an earlier part of his career – he is doing the drudgery of writing these field notes. He is in the University of Kansas Medical School and he's going around with these medical students, or in his next book, called *Making the Grade*<sup>23</sup>, he's hanging out with undergraduates and writing field notes. So he does comparative analytic work at an earlier stage of his life, when he doesn't have tenure, he's not at a big university at the time of those studies. Later on in life he's at a higher status and he can do modeling work. It could be hard to do that at an earlier stage, although in his demeanor Becker is nothing like aristocratic. He's a very accessible person, as is Burawoy. I am not referring to personal demeanor, but to a relation to the means of producing sociological knowledge.

Modeling work reflects a more secure status, to be able to work this way and to pick up examples from a lifetime of experience, as in Becker's art work. Also because he is important and his name got out, he got to know a lot of people. You can do that kind of work because you've got access later in your career – people know you, they've heard about you, and they cooperate with you, so that you can more readily get good evidence from a lot of things and you can do a little more modeling.

**Books&Ideas: In what sense is ethnography politically relevant in our urban societies ?**

**Jack Katz:** Well, first of all, as I argue in the *Annals* paper, if you go out and show how things are and how culture misrepresents, that in itself has political value. Showing that

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<sup>22</sup> H. S. Becker, *Art Worlds*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.

<sup>23</sup> H. S. Becker, B. Geer, E. C. Hughes, *Making the Grade: The Academic Side of College Life*, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1995.

people are being misrepresented by the culture. So Becker has contributed to the whole decriminalization of marijuana and other criminalized drugs. To my knowledge, he hasn't been on the street with it, with a picket sign, he hasn't joined political parties, personally, he has never accepted a position within a professional organization of any value. He would never be chair of any department he was in. He wouldn't take on that power, he wouldn't play that role. But his marijuana essay, which came out in 1953<sup>24</sup> – which is really early if you think about it, with what the state of culture was about marijuana in the United States at the time – I mean millions of college students read that. That informed a whole generation.

Now, has it led to anything? I don't know. Goffman's *Total Institutions* work was cited by the Supreme Court when they were deciding to remove the state's ability to incarcerate people based on mental illness claims when they weren't a danger to anybody else. Some students had read his stuff in college and they were clerking for the Supreme Court Justices, and they got a reference to Goffman into the opinion. So there are signs that these things make a difference.

Because if you show how things are on the ground ethnographically, you're probably going to be fighting some part of the culture that is misrepresented for some power reasons and so to me that is one kind of political response.

But I think ethnography limits its value because it has become too much of an academic specialization, and I'll illustrate this in urban sociology. This is about what I've found I've had to do in studying Hollywood, which now has about 150,000 people, most of whom are Latin American immigrants and poor. There are some glamorous people, but they are a little faction. It is really a diverse and overwhelmingly unglamorous – there is a high poverty rate there and a high crime rate and so forth. To understand what is going on there, I started with an ethnography with two other people; we got a grant. And Maggie Kusenbach was a graduate student and she was looking for a dissertation, and it worked out that she could do her dissertation. And Peter Ibarra, who was in a PhD program at Santa Cruz and I was on the dissertation committee and we got together and he came into the project. And we did observations and interviews with different neighborhoods. They moved into different neighborhoods, I lived around and had known some people in certain neighborhoods. So like a traditional ethnography.

One problem is the challenge to appreciate what the economists study and that is regional development. In urban social science, there is this division between the ethnographers, who study the neighborhoods, people on the corner, following people, going into restaurants, and they ignore completely the region. So you will be basically reading the same kind of study being done, let's say, in Chicago, in 1970 and today. I have to take some issue with people I love, people who are close friends of mine whom I respect, but in fact they never look at the regional developments that structures Chicago as it exists in 2011. If they study a little section of a Black neighborhood or Puerto Rican neighborhood or whatever, it's not the same as that ethnic neighborhood was in 1920, 1950, 1970, and 1990. There are lots of changes going on because of the ecological difference.

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<sup>24</sup> H. S. Becker, « Becoming a Marihuana User », *The American Journal of Sociology*, 59(3), 1953, p. 235-242.

Hollywood, when it started, was the first suburb of LA. Now it's a part of a massive sprawling region. Over a hundred years or so it's been around. When you're doing a neighborhood study you have to take into account where you are in the historical moment in the trajectory of change in the region – that would be something the land economists study. But the economists never look at the neighborhoods. They couldn't care less about local life. The people who look at local life will never look at regional change in any serious way. That's one division that's been a big problem. And that limits what ethnographers can do politically.

I admire Gans' study on the *Urban Villagers*<sup>25</sup>, which you may know, which is about an Italian community in a certain area of Boston in 1960 or so. But the implication that a good number of people take from that is that urban renewal projects by the local government were responsible for destroying this Italian community. Well, in some ways yes, but there are no Italian communities in any American cities anymore. Something was happening more generally so that it was basically just accelerated. It was probably stupider and crueller than it had to be. But it was just part of a transition. Where are the other Italian neighborhoods where there wasn't an urban renewal, in any other American city? There haven't been Italian neighborhoods in 50 years, and he was at a point where they were disappearing anyway. And so, it's not looking at regional development and not looking at history. That's a second big divide between the ethnographic sociologists and the land economists who look at metropolitan regions.

**Books&Ideas: But in the Chicago school of sociology, Park and Burgess already used statistical data to do ethnography...**

**Jack Katz:** That's great. They were into the ecology, which has kind of fallen out now, and people don't see the ecology of the neighborhood as in a very different position now in relation to the larger metropolitan population. But what Park and Burgess never did, that has always haunted urban sociology, is they never had a historical aspect to it. They came into what they understood as an industrial city, but they never really studied how the, quote, "Chicago model" made any sense for Paris, for example, or any sense for Mexico City, which was very quickly pointed out in the literature at the time. That places with very different histories aren't going to get impacted in this way, they are not going to have... I mean industrialization had a different meaning here than it did in the suburbs in the States because of historical reasons, because you had political power and religious power and commercial power all at the center and we didn't. We split them off. You know, we put Washington DC in this artificial place, separate from New York, the commercial power. The political power was separated from the commercial power and the making of the American system is a very different historical phenomenon than what happened in Latin America or Europe. So you're going to have very different foundations for the impact of industrialism.

Burgess and Park never looked at the history and ever since, urban sociologists doing ethnographies don't look at history. They have a very brief historical section but the big question is really – and this is the big question for political relevance – it's often called path dependency. How much room is there for change now, based on what's been done in

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<sup>25</sup> H. J. Gans, *Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans*, The Free Press, 1962.

the past and you can't know that without looking at. Not just going back in time and describing, but looking at which of the things done had sticking power and which of the things were lost. What are the lost futures of the city? What are the ghosts of the city? The possible futures that have been destroyed?

I think you have to use ethnographic sensibility when you do historical research. That's why it's called historical ethnography. What I am doing in Hollywood is, you know, I am going back to basically 1880. And there were three sets of people who developed the area according to their different ways of relating to each other. Each one had a characteristic figure, who was very known at the time leading it. So you can do a lot, like an ethnography or a biography of these people, and see how they operated. So I am using historical materials, reading their correspondence and how the newspapers covered them and biographies done on them. I am trying to show how practically they operated in the city. How they were making money, how their families were developing in relation to their way of making money, where they lived, particular addresses... But I am doing it through historical materials and that helps to show the foundations of what's going on today.

You know, there's a homeless area in Hollywood. Why is there a homeless area in Hollywood? There is not just one homeless area in LA; there are several in different areas. But why in Hollywood and why in that part of Hollywood? It's in the Eastern part of Hollywood, the northeastern part of Hollywood. Why there? There are reasons that started in the 1880s and by the 1920s, institutions were in place, there were churches and hospitals and other things that 80 years later got adapted to serve the homeless. That's why it's there and it's not to the West and it's not the South.

And so the variability that you had then, what kept that? What made that stick? So you get to these kinds of questions, which I think you have to have framed to have relevance to policy people because otherwise what you are saying in urban sociology is "Capitalists screw everything up all the time". There's no particular message there. Since it's the US, everything is capitalist, everything, everywhere, all the variations are combinations of capitalists, politicians corrupting each other. That has never changed, it's always been that way, but there are variations over time and over space. And nobody is going to listen to you because you have no – I mean, that's the voice of cynicism that comes out of the streets. In Hollywood, it's very powerful. "Oh the developers get together and they bribe the councilmen and the mayor, and so they get their way". Ok, they do. It's true, but it's not why the variations exist. That's a constant that can't explain variations in this sense. So there's an irrelevance to a lot of urban ethnography on political terms because they haven't done the work on the economics and the region, and they haven't done any historical work and that's because of academic specialization, because we make it possible to have careers within those boundaries.

### **Books&Ideas: What about the political relevance of your earlier work on gangs?**

**Jack Katz:** I really appreciate the reading you've done. I mean, you've really gotten into a lot of my stuff. I appreciate that. So what's the relevance of that? I wrote some op-eds in newspapers in Los Angeles, things were published and I was on National Public Radio and in the Washington Post, arguing against police actions that are directed against

gangs, because it's part of the myth that gangs cause crime<sup>26</sup>. And so there are some civil liberty violations. In a way, you know, I mean I got an airing. I can't say that anybody ever listened to me and changed what they were doing. So I can say it again and again, but nobody will ever listen.

But part of the background in the riots in Los Angeles in 1992 were these police sweeps of, quote, "gang areas" where they took police who were out in the suburbs, who had never been in these areas and basically they were picking up any black guy they could, young black guys, thinking "they're all in gangs" and maybe they all were in gangs, but they weren't all criminals. This created, you know, violations of civil liberties that all the black leaders of the time supported. All the black leaders were with the police department on this, because they were having such a bad time with crime that they tipped the other way. But this created, when the Rodney King verdict came in, there were all these gang guys who were already organized, they were reinforced in their relations in jail – when they were put in jail but not kept there because they didn't have any evidence on them really. But they have this common experience and this whole sag look, you know, where your pants are almost falling down. It comes out of being given something to wear in jail that doesn't really fit you. So that becomes a cool thing. All this kind of builds up and explodes.

So I think there was political relevance to the critique that comes out of these gang studies. I can say that the Hollywood study is going to attack a lot of common policy ideas. Whether anybody will listen to it, I don't know. Whether it will have any impact, I don't know. But in terms of political relevance to – at least logically as far as I can see – the research questions.

A lot of things thought about urban life are shibboleths – Urban sociologists accept all the ideas that everybody talks about that are just completely at odds with the facts. Gentrification: it's not that some areas haven't gotten bidden up in price, but that's not the fundamental reality in the diversification of the city. Gentrification is like this binary idea of rich people coming in. And yes, some rich people are coming or middle class people. But there are also all kinds of immigrants coming in and all kinds of change to the city. And it's like an abandonment of the project of really understanding what's going on, to use these terms; it's a real problem.

What I think is most fundamentally going on is not so much even class relations; it's really multiple histories, multiple politically relevant histories being lived next to each other, which you can see in class terms but it's not how the people live them. They live that they were in El Salvador during the Civil War and escaped, or, you know, a gay guy in El Salvador where it was impossible, you could get killed if people knew, and they escaped from that. Or they were interned because they were Japanese during the Second World War. I have one woman who was on one of the Channel Islands during in the First World War. And her life was affected when her brother-in-law was killed, and it was all shaped from then on. She is living right next to the Japanese guy, to the El Salvadorian

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<sup>26</sup> J. Katz, C. Jackson-Jacobs, « The Criminologists' Gang », in C. Sumner (Ed.), *Blackwell Companion to Criminology*, London: Blackwell, 2004, p. 91-124 ; J. Katz, « Metropolitan Crime Myths », in D. Halle (Ed.), *Politics, Society and Culture*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003, p. 195-224.

guy, to the young woman from the state of Washington who is in her twenties and making good money and dating and having a lot of fun. It's a set of very different biographical meanings and to collapse all that into poor and middle class is to fundamentally abandon the relevancies of the urban setting the people you are studying, and to fail to appreciate what is new about the city, which is that LA didn't use to have all these different histories.

The US didn't use to have all these different histories. Immigration was closed between about 1920 and 1965, so all of urban sociology was really developed during this period of US history that no longer structures the city. It's since '65 that there has been just a flow of people coming in. And their relevancies are, their focus is most directly on others of their own ethnic group and how they are doing. They are not looking to the neighbor and saying "Oh, am I doing better or worse than the Japanese who was interned and is now a public schoolteacher? I am an El Salvadorian gay guy and I'm working in a hospital facility not far away. Am I doing better or worse than this 25-year-old woman from Washington who is working in a media company?" I mean, that's not where his head is.

There is some reality to that the economic or class differences; you can count those aspects if you want. But you are fundamentally using a class framework and a static framework that is separate from the biographies of the people; so you are not going to be addressing the differences relevant to them<sup>27</sup>.

I think that the whole timing of globalization... I think that "globalization" is in many respects about 180 degrees wrong. What has been going on is deglobalization. That from 1929 to 1965 you had globalization. You had a worldwide war, you had worldwide depression, you had a concentration throughout the Western world – and really much of the Eastern world – of power to the center, of governance, because of war and depression. And since '65 you've had deglobalization – I mean the US and the West have not been in wars in the scale of the Second World War. We haven't had the kinds of economic experiences that previously sustained central authorities and so there's been a loss of central power.

I think that we're still in that now. That's what we are really struggling through, that problems of the build-up of the central powers in governance across the West and maybe – I think it's actually beyond that. What happened in the USSR is now happening to us. We tend to see that as very different, because it's politically so different, but it's basically the building of the central government.

I am not going to get all into that as a general historical statement, but I will argue that in the case of Hollywood. It is a case study and this is like extrapolations that have to be dealt with in a very modest way, but in the case of Hollywood it's clear, and Los Angeles more generally, that '65 was the turning point. In '65 there was a retreat of central government authority in area after area, the national government and the state government, the county and city governments all withdrew authority.

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<sup>27</sup> J. Katz, « Cooks Cooking Up Recipes: The Cash Value of Nouns, Verbs and Grammar », *American Sociologist*, 43(1), 2012, p. 125-134.

Over time that became visible. It starts to become visible – the social effects – in the eighties. That’s why people talk about globalization as a phenomenon of the eighties. They tend to think, I guess, that it’s about new technology and immigration movements and so stimulating new international powers, co-operations and so forth. But I think actually that the real story starts earlier and we’re now in a period that’s never going to go back to what it was before 1929, but where it’s in some respects more like it where you have to have local initiative to get things done. You can’t impose them.

So just a couple of examples, 1965 is really the time that the state stops rounding up homeless people. It’s not the right and it’s not the left, it’s the right and the left. It’s the civil liberties forces and Ronald Reagan in California not wanting to spend money. But it’s also the civil rights forces stopping the police from grabbing homeless people and putting them basically into concentration camps, which used to be the case in LA county. And it’s actually civil rights politicians, African-American civil rights’ politicians who lead the way to stop arresting and putting into confinement facilities young people who were not in school based on their status as incorrigibles. And that causes the homeless problems for youth and for other forms. But that’s 1965 and that’s a withdrawal of state authority. The US stop immigration control, but without announcing it, in 1965. They basically passed new immigration laws and they stopped controlling immigration. And within twenty years you have more immigrants in LA County than you have people who are not immigrants. You have a fantastic transformation of the demographics. All kinds of effects there.

You know, “globalization”, the rhetoric seems to imply the forces of international business and capitalist interests that really don’t figure into these stories. It’s not what’s happening. What’s happening is basically you’re starting to see the middle of the 20th century as a historically unusual period where power went to the center that hadn’t been at the center before. It takes twenty years after the Second World War for this centralization of power to fade. And then you get state highway projects that stopped. I was in Gothenburg, Sweden and they were talking about 65, the late sixties was the first time also that they stopped a highway project from creating new divisions in downtown Gothenburg. It was a time when it was the Watts riots, which were against the Californian highway patrol, but it was also the time of the Beverly Hills protest against the “Beverly Hills” freeway, which was stopped – it was the first time the California highway department had ever been stopped. These things tend not to be seen in urban sociology because people look city by city. There are also a lot of comparisons. There is a whole story about the Westside highway being stopped and at the same time about 1965 in New York. But it’s really about the same time and the same things happening in LA, and in Sweden. I don’t know Paris’s history well enough, but I would expect that the ability to do these projects, that local protest starts to stop these things and central authorities – whether it’s the national government on immigration or it’s the local police on arresting people or if it’s the middle-range authority like the state authority on building highways, which in the US is a middle-range authority. It’s a state not a national responsibility at this time in history. And to a significant extent that starts at the end of the Eisenhower highway building program, which was in the fifties, that by ’65 that steps in.

And so there was a retreat, and now the new social realities... So I think you have to talk about that to be relevant and be correct and see what the areas of actual policy freedom are to make a difference.

**Books&Ideas: So you have to go through a historical work and through ethnography, but how do connect them exactly?**

**Jack Katz:** The book is in three parts. Its foundations are in history; the middle is about biography, which is contemporary, about individuals' lives as they took shape in different neighborhoods, how lives take shape in relationship with the local area in four different ways from the rich people in the hills to the immigrants to other areas. And then there is something about everyday life, like the theater of neighborhood, what you see and how you are seen differs by neighborhood. So the book is in three parts, micro, meso and macro, and these things all get connected.

The transcendence theme is a theme about collective action. It's what I am going to be calling urban alchemy and urban entropy. That there are times when people collaborate and the whole that they produce is greater than the sum of the parts. And then there are times when their relations and interactions undermine the efforts that each does. And this changes historically. And for different parts of Hollywood it's changed historically.

So "transcending" there means really the solution to the prisoner's dilemma, kind of a game theory issue like, if we could communicate and trust each other then we could do things that would be better for each of us. But since we don't trust each other, and don't communicate we undermine each other. I mean, urban life is more alchemical at times, it has this magic that we do more than we can do alone or that we can do just by summing our parts, by having a common faith. And then at times entropy starts and we are basically undermining each other and increasingly disorganizing. But to make that case, I have to lay out the history and these lives and it's premature to talk about that I guess.

**Books&Ideas: We didn't speak about analytic induction, looking for the variation that will allow you to test rival explanations<sup>28</sup>. Is this your definition of ethnography?**

**Jack Katz:** Well it's what I think I can offer best. I am not saying it's the only good thing to do. But I think that it's personally what I can offer. The big challenge is to get away from the culturally established definitions of the topic because that's what gets you support, that's what your friends respond to: "Oh I am going to study the, quote, "poor people" or disorder in the *banlieue*". Well when you get there, you might find that that's not the best terminology for it, that there's lots of different things going on and you need to come up with other terms that fit what's going on and the trouble there is a personal and a political one, because you start to separate from the groups that supported you because that's why you get your research funding, that's why your friends and your family understand enthusiastically what you do. Now "I am studying Sneaky Thrills",

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<sup>28</sup> J. Katz, «From How to Why: On Luminous Description and Causal Inference in Ethnography», *Ethnography*, 3(1), 2(4), 2001-2002 ; J. Katz, « Analytic Induction », in N. Smelser, P. B. Baltes (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Oxford: Elsevier, 2001, p. 443-473.



“oh what is that?”, “No, I am studying youth delinquency”, “Oh ok let’s study youth delinquency, that’s great”. “Oh no, I am studying the Ways of the Badass”, “oh, what’s that?”. You know, so that’s the challenge.

The challenge is to be a naturalist science and the political affiliations that follow from that, but also it’s like distancing yourself. It’s like being an anthropologist locally, which means creating the distance that anthropologists used to have created for them by geography. Now we have to create it for ourselves to get away from the culture that supports us, but by embracing us can suffocate us. I mean, maybe you folks will later talk about what’s going on in, quote, “the suburbs” here, but I hear it so much from a perspective grounded in a French central identity rather than from the biographies of the people, which I don’t know much about, so I can’t speak to it but if I’m thinking like Hollywood, I’m thinking maybe there’s a lot of people out there that the, quote, “disorder” seen there by the French – burning cars and all that – how is that relevant to what they experienced before or wherever they or their families were? The prior generation? What does this experience here mean relative to that?

I understand that from the perspective of the reader of *Le Monde* who is born here, his parents were born here, it looks like a great change to disorder, but that’s to ground yourself not in the lives – to me that’s not an ethnographic grounding. The ethnographic grounding has to be in the lives of those people, which I really don’t know anything about, so I really can’t speak to, but I suspect that it might be much more historical change and anchoring to historical starting points, and places where things were so much more chaotic and corrupt and poor and difficult, and had a certain order of challenges also. That this must be understood – so it’s almost like a blinding to me in a lot of the talk about the youth, it’s just putting up more and more barriers to see who these people are. Although I can’t say that I’ve done enough.

**Books&Ideas: That’s a paradox because you’re looking for distance while keeping phenomenon, whereas Goffman used to maintain distance without looking to phenomenon at first as a methodological stance.**

**Jack Katz:** I will tell you one difference from Goffman and what I think to study in interactions: that is sequence. Goffman never really studied sequence. He had the moral career of a mental patient. He had a few little sketches of it, of change. But even the moral career, it wasn’t really – well he was playing with the idea, but he didn’t seriously get to it. He would like grab fragments from different people’s lives but not follow through the stages. This is why his book on forms of talk – I find as always that there are brilliant things in it, as everything he does, but it doesn’t follow sequentially, it doesn’t take its terms that way. And if you follow sequence, then you can take both cultural distance but you ground yourself in what is practically relevant to people because they have to do things over time. Everybody has to live his life over time. So I think it’s a solution to the apparent contradiction. If you follow sequence or practice.

Published in Books & Ideas, April 1<sup>st</sup> 2013  
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