Interactionism Meets Historical Analysis: An Author-Critic Dialogue on "Revolution and Witchcraft: The Code of Ideology in Unsettled Times"

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Abstract: In this article, an author-meets-critics session is recorded for the book "Revolution and Witchcraft: The Code of Ideology in Unsettled Times," authored by Gordon C. CHANG. The session took place at the 2024 Annual Meeting of the Social Science History Association (SSHA) in Toronto, Canada. Beside the author, panelists included sociologist Andrew CHALFOUN (University of California, Los Angeles); sociologist Tad SKOTNICKI (University of North Carolina, Greensboro); historian Aminda SMITH (Michigan State University); and communication scholar J.R. OSBORN (Georgetown University). The highly unconventional, cross-disciplinary nature of the book sparked an engaging dialogue. Differing opinions were voiced regarding: 1. How—and whether—CHANG in his "codification model" advanced a workable, original sociology of knowledge approach; 2. the utility of that model for scholars from different disciplines who study idea systems and social phenomena; 3. the difference between idea systems that are empirically based and those that are ideationally based; and 4. how microscopic analysis of language might make causal claims about macroscopic patterns of humanistic and social-scientific relevance. These issues arose due to differences between and among diverse approaches of interactionism and historical analysis. In this dialogue, methodological decisions and judgments are unveiled which were involved in CHANG's eclectic study, as well as applications and areas of future development that are otherwise hidden in the research product.

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1. Introductory and Remarks: CHANG's Arguments Regarding Sociological and Analytic Imagination (J.R. OSBORN)

Gordon CHANG, in his book "Revolution and Witchcraft: The Code of Ideology in Unsettled Times," invited readers to think about how "ideas systems" (p.12) can overwhelm individuals or even whole societies. The author adopted a heavy dose of interactionism in his historical analysis to explain why and how this occurs. Using what he called the "codification model" (pp.36-41), CHANG demonstrated how ideas of ultimately disastrous consequences are formed in small steps and how these steps gather strength by being linked together in "chains" (p.109). Big errors, per the rendition of his cases, do not appear in any of the small steps; they can be seen only when a reader goes back and forth between the chains (pp.109-122, 211-233). [1]

To build this argument, CHANG presented three separate but subtly linked historical case studies, namely: The European witch hunts of the late Middle Ages and the early modern period, the MAO-Zedong era campaigns and movements in mid-20th century Communist China (including the Cultural Revolution), and the War on Terror conducted by the United States in the early 21st century. CHANG worked across these cases in a comparative fashion to explore how ideas, evidence, and happenings are codified into what he calls idea systems—which is a term that he prefers to "ideology." The three-case comparison reveals that idea systems can have different patterns of codification. Some systems primarily operate on empirical forms of evidencing and falsification (e.g., the witch-hunt case), while other systems are more conducive to ideational forms (e.g., the MAO-era case). Hybrid idea systems can harbor both forms, which operate differently at different times and in different contexts (e.g., the War on Terror case). [2]

1.1 CHANG's model as a set of analytic tools

I posit that the utility of the book is a working set of intellectual tools that others can borrow and apply to comparative studies of historical and contemporary idea systems. These tools are extended by an accompanying educational website, which provides pedagogical materials and diagrams that do not appear in the book. I have a research program looking specifically at diagrams and diagrammatic representations of social theory (OSBORN, 2005; OSBORN et al., 2023).[1] Working with students, CHANG and I explained his model via the website diagrams, and we asked them to apply his model of codification to smartphone apps. The exercise illuminated some incredibly pertinent questions, especially now, in the era of AI, where devices not only support, share and mediate idea systems but they also reflect them, learn from them, and regenerate them anew. The diagrams helped demonstrate how AI platforms, which are very good at forming new linkages, might potentially build and strengthen novel—or troubling —idea systems in our own "unsettled times." [3]

Based on classroom experience, CHANG's methodological tools can assist both instructors and students in order to deepen their discussion of digital apps and digital data collection. This is but one example of how CHANG's codification model can apply to cases beyond those presented in the book. CHANG's development of intellectual and critical tools offers a useful methodological contribution to the sociology of knowledge, as well as interdisciplinary scholarship more generally. [4]

In "Revolution and Witchcraft, " CHANG took an audacious swing, methodologically speaking. He deviated from common analytic paths in cultural studies, comparative historical research, discourse analysis, and multiple kinds of "interactionism" (e.g., VOM LEHN, RUIZ-JUNCO & GIBSON, 2021) in an attempt to chart new terrain. He was audacious to posit an original, analytic model that "sees" humans' cognitive processes in terms of "codification," and to suggest a singular "code" that cracks that codification. [5]

Regarding how the book's codification models may be employed outside of its original scope and topics of engagement, I pose a series of related questions. Given that the three case studies offered in "Revolution and Witchcraft" are fairly political—they all offer historical, social cases of political and judicial reasoning— what other types of reasoning or in what other areas does CHANG see the model as being applicable? Are there other cases where he would like to see the model applied? The book's cases are primarily derived from archival research which is then analyzed via discourse and textual analysis. For those wishing to employ the model and apply it to different cases, what types of scholarship can they build upon? How might scholars develop the context of the idea systems they are

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1 OSBORN's research-oriented collection of diagrams and some initial exhibitions can be found at "Diagrams and Visual Thinking" (OSBORN et al., 2023), a website that OSBORN created with students in 2023. This diagram collection project is open and collaborative with over 50 contributors and research collaborators. Individuals who contributed to the design of the current site are listed on the website's "About" page. OSBORN's most direct discussion of diagrams as cognitive and discursive tools appeared in OSBORN (2005).

examining? Shall they follow CHANG's method of archival research analyzed via discourse analysis, or can ethnographic methods contribute to the model? What about quantitative and statistical approaches? Are other methods of data collection applicable? In short, what types of contextual knowledge do scholars need in order to apply "the code of ideology" and the "codification model" to cases of their choosing? [6]

1.2 An overview of the upcoming discussion

In this discussion, a panel of critics will pose questions of broad relevance to qualitatively oriented researchers, especially those whose works intersect with broader inquiries across the social sciences and the humanities. First, approaching the material from an ethnomethodological background, Andrew CHALFOUN questions the micro-macro connections of CHANG's work. Although CHANG makes multiple efforts to systematically bridge the micro-macro link, CHALFOUN asks him to specify the methodology more precisely: What is the unifying logic behind CHANG's method of linking the micro and the macro? Additionally, and relatedly, since the method entails discourse analysis, how does CHANG justify the primary focus on front-stage activities, rather than backstage negotiations? [7]

Secondly, Tad SKOTNICKI, rooted in historical and cultural sociology, interrogates the logic of casing as well as the book's selective analytic focus. SKOTNICKI notes that discourse analysis scholars do not typically involve such extended comparative-historical case studies. Comparative-historical researchers do not typically incorporate such extensive examinations and close studies of discourse. When combining these methods, how can researchers select cases and analytic foci that remain tasteful and legitimate? For example, does it make sense for scholars to focus on idea-related elements while downplaying the material-related ones? How can one justify the decision to examine cognition rather than emotion, especially across cases of drastically different temporal scales and data diversity? [8]

Finally, historian Aminda SMITH finds the book helpful in refuting simplistic and misleading impressions of MAO-era China, especially the unnuanced claim that Chinese citizens during MAO's era were either brainwashing agents or brainwashed dupes. CHANG provided a middle ground in which all ranks of people, from peasants to master manipulators deploy similar sets of tools in the building of idea "chains" (pp.18-21) and intellectual linkages. However, SMITH does question the legitimacy of portraying revolutionary ideology as primarily "ideationally driven" (p.23). From the provided data, she perceives a mixture of empirical and ideational elements. If MAO-era idea systems lean toward an ideational mode, do individuals within this system not possess an equally valid empirical mindset? This distinction is consequential because social researchers who interpret the codification patterns of their research in a particular way may neglect concurrent, opposite patterns. This, in turn, might misjudge the fundamental character of a knowledge system. As CHANG himself argued, even

the smallest of improper linkages can produce drastic effects as intellectual ideas expand into larger systems of understanding. [9]

Any attempt at methodological border-crossing often opens a Pandora box of analytic complications. This dialogue—which comprises the critics' commentaries and CHANG's reply—illuminates the challenge of integrating interactionism and historical analysis. Although CHANG provides the focus of discussion, the questions are methodological, and one does not need to have read CHANG's book to benefit from these exchanges. For scholars who have read "Revolution and Witchcraft*"* and wish to apply its models to their own fields, however, or for teachers wishing to utilize the code of ideology website for pedagogical purposes, I hope the discussion provides some signposts toward future applications. [10]

2. Social Structure and Individual Interactions in Historical Investigations (Andrew CHALFOUN)

2.1 A hand-tied social interactionist

It is a pleasure to be here to discuss CHANG's "Revolution and Witchcraft." A project like CHANG's highlights an important weakness found in the dominant approaches to social interaction. Many people who work on micro-processes rely on a myth of empiricism. The methods that social scientists typically employ—ethnography or close analysis of recorded data—allow analysts to pretend that they have pre-theoretical access to the *just thisness* of specific situations and that on the basis of observation and analysis alone, they can engage in a purely descriptive process that produces generalizable findings. [11]

In trying to tease out the micro-dynamics of historical processes, CHANG was a social interactionist with one hand tied behind his back. Rather than observe interactions directly, for much of the book he must reconstruct interactions from the available sources. As such, interaction becomes a theoretical construct used to pull together archival and evidentiary material into a coherent whole. While this working method makes the investigation of micro-processes much more difficult, it also suggests that studies of micro-interaction are never purely descriptive; they always entail a process of modeling and conceptualizing. [12]

2.2 Questions for the author

2.2.1 The choice of cases

With these observations in mind, I pose a few questions and comments. First, I would appreciate more clarity about the logic of selecting these three cases. Since this panel is at the [Social Science History Association](#) (SSHA), it seems appropriate to acknowledge that the cases fit neither with a most-different or a most-similar selection design (SKOCPOL & SOMERS, 1980, pp.176-187). What then holds these rather diverse choices together? Or to put it differently, other than our own normative and political commitments, what are the criteria for identifying a situation in which, as CHANG put it, "ideologies and ideologues run rampant or amok" (p.1)? [13]

2.2.2 Actors' creativity and intelligence

Second, early on CHANG made the distinction between "intelligent social cognition" that involves active manipulation of the idea system on the one hand and "standardized, routine maneuvers" on the other hand (p.20). Given that many theorists have emphasized the creativity involved in even the most mundane practices, is this distinction sustainable (GARFINKEL, 1967; JOAS, 1996 [1992]; WITTGENSTEIN, 2009 [1953])? If it is sustainable, what is the reason for focusing on the former (intellectual manipulation) rather than the latter (routine maneuvers)? [14]

2.2.3 The choice to analyze front stage over back stage

Third, CHANG's approach privileged public speech made for overhearing audiences over internal communications between social actors formulating discursive strategies. Why focus on the public phase of discourse propagation, rather than the work of planning, anticipating and formulating these discursive strategies prior to their presentation for the public? [15]

2.2.4 Micro-macro linkages

My final question is whether this work is, in some sense, reinventing the wheel? Other scholars, including Randall COLLINS (1981, 2004) and Anthony GIDDENS (1984), have attempted to bridge the macro-micro divide conceptually. Yet, despite their significance within the discipline, they do not appear as interlocutors within the text. Therefore, I think it is of critical importance to consider how this book relates to—extends, challenges, or diverts—previous attempts to conceptualize the relationship between social structure and individual interactions. [16]

3. Casing and Causality (Tad SKOTNICKI)

3.1 Does idea matter, and how much?

In "Revolution and Witchcraft," CHANG offered an ambitious and thoughtful account of ideas as systems. As a comparative historical sociologist heavily involved in social theory, I see this book as raising some fundamental theoretical and methodological questions. Do individuals tie themselves in knots with ideas? Does this give ideas too much credit? Should we, as social scientists, credit ideas as motivating forces? Is that any more or less sensible than crediting their arch nemeses, the material? If anyone can decompose and reconstruct ideas as systems, does anyone stand a chance of properly crediting his/her role in social life? [17]

The central issue for CHANG is what he called codification—designing, selecting, and utilizing conventional symbols in the service of idea-making. To what extent does CHANG think that these power relations, these abilities to innovate and manipulate within idea systems, depend on the world outside of the idea systems? The case studies—European witch hunts, China under MAO, and the War on Terror—focus overwhelmingly on actors who occupy prominent roles in states and churches and towns. Is it reasonable or defensible to attribute causal power to idea systems if such power is, in no small part, a function of something external to the idea system itself. In other words, outside of "idea systems," (p.12) people are located in social space, organizations, and institutions. How do these factors influence actors' abilities to manipulate idea systems? [18]

3.2 Differentiating between rational and irrational cognition

CHANG investigated these idea systems via three cases that one might describe as moral panics or mass hysteria. CHANG treated these as driven by rigorous and cognitively sophisticated codification processes. I would interject a question: Why should scholars think about cognitive sophistication as rational or at least not irrational? To my mind, perhaps one of the most compelling aspects of CHANG's argument is the ability to dissolve the opposition of rationality and irrationality, as well as reasons and emotion, by focusing on these sorts of cognitively sophisticated processes. In "Revolution and Witchcraft," CHANG outlined how it is possible for individuals to do quite irrational things in cognitively sophisticated ways, and in his analysis, readers see matters such as emotion and reason converging. [19]

3.3 Casing choices by codification types and spatial-temporality

The case studies represent three different versions of idea systems; empirically driven witch hunts, ideationally driven persecutions in China under MAO, and a hybrid War on Terror model. The witch hunts involved the forensic identification, elaboration, and proliferation of empirical evidence of witchcraft behavior. China under MAO involved proliferating betrayals of certain ideals, which were punished brutally, while the War on Terror merged these two tendencies. This brings me to several important questions regarding casing and categorization. The first is this: How do analysts draw the line around particular idea systems? Take the issue of witch hunts. If witch hunts are a function of Christian metaphysics, can scholars still say that they are empirically driven? Does this differ in any meaningful way from the ideationally driven account that CHANG provided of China? Moreover, why treat the whole of China under MAO as one idea system, rather than focus on particular periods of MAO's rule? Why not the Great Leap Forward or the Cultural Revolution as a case?[2] Relatedly, the witch hunts span four centuries, China under MAO four decades, but the War on Terror, particularly the part that CHANG focuses on, just three or four years. So how does the degree of temporal centralization and localization affect the cases? [20]

3.4 Diverse data materials

I also wonder about data materials across the cases. Evidence of witchcraft is largely "extratextual," whereas the evidence of revolutionary crimes was often "textual." Accounts of witches were documented by particular figures, in the form of certain reports. These reports describe how people in town or the surrounding area have done things that make them prosecutable as witches. But fundamentally, the reports refer to occurrences outside of the texts. In contrast, many of the controversies in China involved essays and words. The "evidence" here is actual written texts, and actors are scrutinizing such written texts to identify errors, ideological errors, or errors of failures to conform to a Maoist idea system. So how do these different kinds of data—one largely extratextual and the other textual—structure CHANG's observations? How do these differences figure into CHANG's casing strategy? [21]

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2   The case study in the book spanned 30 years from 1949 to 1976, the entire era during which MAO Zedong held top leadership positions until his death. The Great Leap Forward campaign was launched in 1958, aiming to surpass the West in development within 10 to 15 years through organized collective efforts. By 1959, the campaign was largely considered a failure, contributing to three years of nationwide starvation and shortages. MAO resigned from the presidency in 1959.

The Cultural Revolution is often associated with the period between 1966 and 1969 when MAO returned to power following a successful grassroots upheaval, though the term may also be associated with the entire decade from 1966 to 1976 (CHANG, pp.155-164). The exact periodization is not central to our discussion. SKOTNICKI questions why the author chooses 1949-1976 as a case period rather than, say, 1959-1962, 1966-1969, or 1966-1976.

3.5 Various non-cognitive factors

All of these casing questions conduce questions about the "ideality" of idea systems and the basis for inferring the causal power of ideas. In "Still Life" (2020), Fernando Dominguez RUBIO gave what he called an ecological account of Modern Art as an idea; the idea depends just as much on infrastructure, design, labor, and the environment as it does on the cognitive and ideational processes that scholars would conventionally associate with ideas. Thus, non-cognitive factors matter. If scholars agree that idea systems are, at least in part, materially and socially grounded, then it is difficult to rule out the possibility that observable effects—e.g., the persecution and the destruction of lives and livelihoods—might be attributable to features outside of the idea systems themselves. The structure of states, markets, and community life; practices, and habits of everyday life; the built environment and the ecological context—all of these factors organize the situations in which and through which these horrors occur. [22]

4. Re-looking at Revolutionary Codifications in MAO Zedong Era (Aminda SMITH)

4.1 CHANG's upending impressionistic, irrational portrayal of MAO-era social actors

To begin, one of the things I really appreciate about "Revolution and Witchcraft" is the way that the author showed how diverse, and sometimes troubling, idea systems made sense, and how these idea systems were even grounded in good intentions and reasonable goals. [23]

CHANG upended the idea that witch trials or Maosim or the War on Terror were based on illogic. I found this upending to be successful because it seems that nobody would believe in a clearly simplistic explanation of these kinds of things. But in the case of Maosim scholars often do. There is simply this undead trope that MAO's ideas never made any sense, that the whole thing was simply ridiculous, and that all these people—from top nuclear scientists to rural farmers with a lifetime of experience and knowledge about agricultural techniques—uncritically accepted a few simplistic propositions that never made any sense. In practice, most Great Leap Forward decisions were based on rigorous research. Yet researchers disagreed, and they disagreed on things that went terribly wrong. And from what I've seen, the main cause of things going wrong wasn't for lack of rigorous thinking, nor was it pure authoritarian terror. [24]

CHANG gave his readers a richer and more convincing proposition. He argued that it's not the lack of intellectual rigor, or low-quality evidence, or even a problem with the epistemology, or the methods of knowledge production—in fact, it's the opposite. Contrary to what people often assume, it's not poorly reasoned or poorly developed idea systems that are most likely to go askew but instead, and I quote, "the more promising and sound an idea system is, the more

informational merit it possesses and the more it has been refined, polished and tested by intelligent minds, the more extreme the results it can produce" (p.388). [25]

4.2 Social actors' dynamic codification activities within powerful idea systems

Another idea that I thought was really compelling was thinking about such levels of people, whether they are master manipulators, minor manipulators, or simply users that over time get the ability to at least be semi-manipulators. Perhaps they do not quite reach the skill level of MAO, but individuals are able to really work with this acquired way of codification. And the more people who you have learning this system and making it their own and working with it in ways that are meaningful and generative and empowering for them, the more you introduce the possibility of actors constructing little mis-links—in the incremental process of shaping and misshaping. These mis-links can accumulate and eventually make the whole thing fall apart. [26]

This makes sense to me in many ways. While I was reading "Revolution and Witchcraft," I was working on a project with one of my graduate students (ZOU Yun) about women who came forward with accusations of sexual assault during the Cultural Revolution. We were reading some letters from my research archive that a woman had sent to local authorities in the late 1960s. She was talking about a sexual assault by someone who had assaulted her much earlier, back in the early 1950s. And one of the things that she said repeatedly was that she had never felt confident that she could speak out about this incident because she wasn't sure that anyone would listen. But she wrote, and I quote: "When I learned about the campaign to criticize Liu Shaoqi I realized that this was a moment when people like that were being brought to justice, and it gave me the courage to tell my story."[3] [27]

When I first read this woman's letters, I thought about how people often look at cases like this and treat them as an example of people manipulating political language—individuals striving to get what they want by making accusations that are separate from Maosim, as if the issue does not have anything to do with the larger system or the actual thought categories of Maosim. It seemed to me that this woman's case showed that claims of Maoist misdirection were only partially true: Maybe there was something about the discourse of Maosim that once you learn to use it, it opens up particular kinds of possibilities. Accordingly, when I looked closely at her letters I couldn't fully figure out how she found the image of LIU Shaoqi in her assaulter. To clarify, while I could construct a process through which she might have done so, to my own mind she did not lay it out explicitly, and what she said did not convince me that she had mapped such similarities very

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3   LIU Shaoqi was an early Communist intellectual and revolutionary leader, who assumed the Presidency of the People's Republic of China in 1959 after MAO Zedong stepped down from the position, in the aftermath of the Great Leap Forward campaign's failure. During the early period of the Cultural Revolution, LIU was criticized as a corrupt, rightist, and counterrevolutionary. He was placed under house arrest in 1967 and expelled from the Party in 1968 (CHANG, p.156). The letter mentioned belongs to Aminda SMITH's private collection pertaining to a research project on women's experiences during the Cultural Revolution.

carefully. To paraphrase CHANG's argument, it seems like she took a sort of "squishy block" and squished it into something that did not quite fit. [28]

This said, the discourse of Maosim was incredibly empowering for her. In her consideration, there were enough similarities between her attacker and LIU Shaoqi that she felt confident in reporting the attack. And this confidence provided her with the epistemological authority to make a case for a crime that was committed upon her and to seek justice on her own behalf. Namely, it was the "idea system" of the political discourse that opened the opportunity. [29]

Reading CHANG's work was something of a revelation, albeit a sad one, because I think what I found there is precisely what made Maosim so meaningful to so many people—i.e., that it was a flexible set of ideas that anyone could use to gain something that most people were denied, which is, namely, epistemological authority. And this trait, which was the very thing that might have made Maosim meaningful to so many, was the same trait that made Maosim likely to produce such disastrous results. It's precisely this quality: So many people could work with the idea system, and that created a massive globalizing phenomenon. The scope of the discourse of Maosim made it especially vulnerable to the series of errors that can accumulate and create such a disaster. [30]

4.3 The empirical-ideational differentiation pertaining to the MAO-Zedong era idea system

While I consider that CHANG has put his finger on something really powerful, and I consider the argument presented in "Revolution and Witchcraft" valid at the broadest level, I remain uncertain about the models and methods of analysis. CHANG argued that Maosim best fit into his "ideational model" of an idea system. I know that one of his points is that this is akin to a Venn diagram, i.e., things can be both ideational and also empirical, but I also think that it matters that he treated Maosim as primarily ideational. In doing so, CHANG suggested that MAO's ideas were not founded on established empirical knowledge. MAO, MARX, LENIN, or any other Marxist would deeply disagree with that suggestion. They all argued that more just socialist futures were already existing potentialities within the social and material realities of the capitalist world as it was. Solid historical analysis grounded in empirical observations was a significant part of what made Marxism, and later Maosim, appealing to so many people. It was supposed to be equally scientific, a form of Western post-Enlightenment set of theories. [31]

Therefore, I would say that CHANG was right in suggesting that Maosim was ideational, in the sense and that they were projecting future developments that had not yet taken place. Yet this is the case even in the most empirical of epistemologies. I think that in some ways Maosim operates very similarly to the witch trials: Actors were working with things that they believed to be ontologically real categories. In Maosim, these included the assumed fact that societies develop through human interaction with their material worlds—that the history of human civilization had demonstrated, and recent history had proven, that humans

could radically transform their social and material environments in ways that would have seemed impossible. [32]

CHANG was correct in depicting that not everyone who worked with the thought categories of Maosim understood all the underlying Marxian empiricism. Yet they likely knew that Marxism and Maosim were *supposed* to be empirical. The message that Marxist and Maoist ideas are scientific appeared on propaganda posters. Therefore, I think—as do many historians who work on the Great Leap Forward and other grand Maoist projects—that the disasters of Maosim were produced, in some ways, by the same ideologies that produced all the other terrible disasters of the 19th and 20th centuries. To expand: Hunger shortages, imperialism, the use of the atomic bomb—all these were produced like the famine of the Great Leap Forward. In each case, the world was perceived as operating under extremely empirical epistemologies or in an "empirical" way. Yet, despite this perceived empiricism, the results were often disastrous. [33]

5. Reply To Critics (Gordon CHANG)

5.1 Methodological logics

In "Revolution and Witchcraft," I tried to show readers "the code of ideology." One of the book's ambitions is, borrowing an articulation from the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse scholars, "reconstructing the dynamics of knowledge orders" for readers (HORNIDGE, KELLER & SCHÜNEMANN, 2018, p.5). There are many ways to carry out this sociology of knowledge project, and I am particularly influenced by ethnomethodology. Drawing upon phenomenology, ethnomethodology is embedded with a higher standard than other schools of thought in demanding that analysts engage phenomena "in their own terms" (to the extent this is possible) without being controlled by any preconceived notions or conventions, yet at the same time knowing that it is not possible to act without any preconceptions (LANGENOHL, 2009a, 2009b; MEHAN & WOOD, 1983 [1975]; SUCHMAN, GERST & KRÄMER, 2019). Thus, analysts should be rigorous and reflexive; and simplifications should be eschewed. They should practice mental bracketing and perspective-switching, keeping in mind that they actively construct the phenomenon that they see. Analysts should remember that what they observe is tied to how individual or social actors (e.g., historians, judges, writers, politicians, or the knowledgeable cultural practitioners in general) assemble ideas and construct accounts. If a scholar has an idea about how others make ideas—that is, the scholar sees a pattern of sorts by observations— the said scholar should go back and forth between those asserted ideas and the data, illustrating to others how the patterns that they believe exist came to be. This is a "grounded theory" approach (GLASER & STRAUSS, 1967). In ethnomethodological terms, this project may be identified as "respecification" (GARFINKEL, 1991; RAWLS, 2006). And this approach is uncommon in comparative-historical sociology, or in history more generally. As a result, the historical casing and analytic logics are also different. [34]

In a nutshell, I attempted to display to readers the relationship between ideas and certain outcomes. Let's play with the language of "variables." On one side are sets of (ideological) "ideas" acting as independent variables, and on the other side are outcomes, which I will tentatively call—in this case—"horror." Putting it in these terms, a causal proposition embedded in the book is: Idea systems cause events of horror The *horror* of the events is the outcome, and this is not simply the physical "outcomes" of deaths or legal prosecutions. The *horror* is qualitative; it is somewhat fluid but nevertheless graspable; and it is seen in the events phenomenologically. It is a feeling which arose in the course of my research that I believe readers will also see with some degree of intersubjectivity. As Frederick ERICKSON, who reviewed the book, noted: "As we ponder Chang's discussion, we may wonder if George Orwell may have been an optimist" (2024, p.335). Here, ERICKSON was seeing what I want to convey to readers as a semi-coherent class of things, akin to the class of things that attracts us to the works of George ORWELL. [35]

As I understand it, the *horror* illustrated in ORWELL's works—most prominently "Animal Farm" (1945) and "Nineteen Eighty-Four" (1949)—is that a system installed a code (and an idea system) that made no inherent sense, and it was precisely the system that "rationally" organized the order of things in society within the novels. This situation resulted in havocs and absurdities (i.e., contradictions), and occasionally inhumanity. ORWELL implicitly asked: How can such "inhuman" ideas "make sense"—what does it take socially, cognitively, and discursively for these idea systems to make sense? [36]

In "Revolution and Witchcraft," I looked into historical cases not just casually but with a similar ethnomethodological eye: I see horror as the "abuse" of an idea system and human nature. To put it another way, a certain human weakness— which may be built into a deep universal construct or "deep structure," borrowing Noam CHOMSKY's expression (1965, pp.16-17, 128-147)—was exploited or released by the abuse of ideas. Moreover, it was not simply that the abuse was done by *others*. In profound ways, people did these acts with one another and themselves, often in minute ways that they might not have recognized. The diverse cases of the book helped me explore how potentially widespread this activity was across cultures, time periods, movements, and idea systems. Thinking through the intriguing contrastive cases helped me—and can help its readers—build cumulative insights, contemplating whether the observable human weakness might be universal (or at least "generalizable" across many cases of social formations). In social science terms, choosing these cases was a move that I made to increase potential generalizability. [37]

I started this project by focusing on the post-9/11 War on Terror, which is now the final historical case of the book. The War on Terror case in itself did not give me the sense that I could conduct "respecificaton" (GARFINKEL, 1991) on the phenomenon I saw (i.e., "reconstructing the dynamics of knowledge orders," HORNIDGE et al., 2018, p.5) in ways that were the most useful. I found it hard for readers to extrapolate from what they saw in that case to other contexts. Just like reading across multiple dystopian fiction pieces (e.g., HELLER, 1961; HUXLEY,

1932; ORWELL, 1945, 1949) can help a reader gain deeper insights into a phenomenon—let me call it *the abuse of ideas*—I chose cases based on how my choice could help me capture this phenomenon in a social scientific study. [38]

In the end, I chose three cases, which can be seen as three interrelated short films. I could not use any one case to build a sufficiently strong argument, perhaps because of the respective data and research limitations. But using the three cases together, I finally was able to paint a powerful picture that captured the phenomenon, conveying what I actually intended. It is also important to note that by the nearly final stage of my writing, my theoretical frameworks had already "evolved" far beyond the early days of just looking at the War on Terror. It was not until I processed the three cases together for a long time that I could formulate a way for readers to connect them. That formulation is what I now call the "codification model"—virtually, it is a model of how codification works across seven domains or components of idea construction: 1. *Happenings*, 2. *pre-coded information*, 3. *codes*, 4. *coded information*, 5. *data*, 6. *ideas*, and 7. *idea systems* (CHANG, pp.13-17). After I formalized this model, all three cases were re-processed through it. [39]

There were many cases that I could have chosen. And even within the cases I chose, I could have picked, say, a shorter duration or a segmented event within the case and called that a case. I could have extended the War on Terror case to other U.S. activations of American Civil Religion, or limited the MAO case to a single project of the Cultural Revolution. But I ended up settling with these three. My "logic" in this decision concerns capturing an "idea system" which would require more than a snapshot, and the idea system had to cause more than a single event. I wanted to propose a cross-cultural dimension to what I found, and I sought a diverse set of activities associated with different meaning systems. The final choice of cases had to go together well, without being intolerably long, and would still "tell a story" with enough details to deliver a main insight of the book, which I later summarized with the book's opening lines: "Ideas ... are prone to abuse. Human beings ... are prone to abuse ideas" (p.1). [40]

5.2 When ideas matter more or less

In "Revolution and Witchcraft" I focused on ideas (including idea systems, actions, processes) and their effects. I did not focus on the materialist aspects of things. A researcher can infer that idea-making probably has *some* effects on the scale of material, physical misfortunes (e.g., the deaths, prosecutions, and undesirable material outcomes). But to engage this topic seriously would require a fully fledged dialectical analysis, which is also beyond the scope of the book. Historians (and social scientists) often aim to conduct a comprehensive accounting of, for example, why WWII or the Cold War happened, and they proceed with all kinds of structural, cultural, materialist, and agency/contingency analyses. These works rarely claim explicit causation, but they imply causation, even if it is hard to specify the relative weight of various causes. [41]

My contribution to these efforts is synthetic. I analyzed multiple sources addressing each of the cases, and I found that those sources do not account for idea factors and processes sufficiently. The common working model was too simplistic. In some of these accounts, very rich ideas are reified into simple summaries or summary words of ideology (e.g., "communism" or "American exceptionalism"). The substance and complexity of ideas (and idea-making) are not captured. Discourse analysts also miss the point if they, at any time, become fixated on discrete elements, actions, or units. If they detach ideas from human actors and reduce them to chunks of disembodied units, then ideas as a "variable" do not seem to matter, because chunks of ideas are on all sides and everywhere even if the ideas may seem a little different from one another. Big-picture holistic descriptions may help to resolve some of these problems, but how can people pinpoint what is happening *in situ* (e.g., how a specific idea is being abused)? [42]

Relating to the early agendas of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, there is a real need for scholars to demonstrate how people weave together complex ideas as objects "moment by moment" without also losing sight of the relevance of "history" (GOODWIN & SALOMON, 2019). But, to my knowledge, there has not been a systematic approach for this kind of analysis that captures the complex *cognitive* activities (micropractices) in detail and in situated (historical, institutional, environmental, cultural, epistemic, interpersonal, etc.) contexts.[4] Integrating ethnomethodological reflexivity into sociological reflexivity has been exceedingly challenging (LANGENOHL, 2009b), not because scholars have not entertained the idea but because it is very tricky when it comes down to executing it through a good "theory/methods package" (CLARKE & STAR, 2007). In "Revolution and Witchcraft," I describe the challenge as the "gestalt problem" (p.7). If my codification model provides a systematic way for scholars to zoom into one or two salient details about an idea system at a given time, then scholars can better account for how particular parts work within the synthetic whole, the "big picture." If they can do so, then they may better account for ideas and their users as so-called variables shaping the unfolding of events and outcomes. However, the study is not set up to treat "whole events" as the outcome variables —and hence Tad SKOTNICKI was right in pointing out that materialist elements for idea-making and idea systems were heavily omitted. I focused my ambition simply on demonstrating that if researchers cannot account for the effects of micropractices (which are systemically mediated in a dynamic way), then they would miss some important variables (and potential research questions) altogether as they attempt to account for the big picture. By skipping over the semiotic terrain too much, efforts in "interpretive sociology" can be significantly compromised (for an elaboration of this argument, see CHANG, in press). [43]

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4   While it is not possible or necessary to capture all layers of contexts in any single action or interaction, it is important to engage with contexts selectively (hopefully with good judgment as well) in order to account for the production of a phenomenon (KNORR CETINA, KRÄMER & SALOMON, 2019). Many common analytic approaches readily forego too much "complexities" (CLARKE & KELLER, 2014) in human cognition because the analyses are abstracted from their situated contexts almost completely.

5.3 Ideational and empirical evidentiary types

Regarding the ideational vs. empirical distinction which was raised by a number of critics: These are Weberian ideal types (WEBER, 1949 [1904]). To recap the contrast briefly, picture the difference between someone claiming another person to be "materially wealthy" versus "spiritually wealthy" in contemporary everyday conversation. Material wealth is tied to a set of empirical indicators. If it is empirical evidence that is proven false—e.g., a purportedly wealthy person actually only has five dollars in the bank account and owes others money—then the overarching idea is hard to sustain, even if someone tries. Currently, the idea of spiritual "wealth" is much more flexible. If a purportedly spiritually wealthy person—Person Y—is discovered to be spiritually deprived in some ways, a creative interpreter may modify people's expectations or find new evidence to demonstrate "spirituality." That interpreter might posit that Person Y does not appear to fit people's previous image of spiritual wealth, but everyone—including the best—has setbacks, and that, within an alternative interpretation, setbacks are a test of one's spirituality. Person Y, it can then be suggested, has a strong spiritual foundation and is therefore recovering. The idea system can certainly break down if there is too much counterevidence but, relatively speaking, the ideational mode of "spiritual wealth" is much more flexible than the empirical mode. [44]

In practice, these differences blur. The two modes intertwine and mix, thus adding to the difficulty of delineating their *exact* differences in particular cases. It is not the most important part of the book's mission to build an argument one way or the other, but the distinction does serve as a way to guide readers through different kinds of logic (and logical assumptions) in the details of the chosen cases. I very much appreciate Aminda SMITH's use of the Venn diagram analogy, as I did not do enough to emphasize the overlap across "empirical" and "ideational" cases. Aminda SMITH drove home the overlapping part and states that empirical modes of codification figure prominently in MAO-era epistemology and ontology, which I labeled as predominantly "ideational" (CHANG, pp.22, 23, 171-175). A scientific ethos is a prominent part of socialist, revolutionary ideas. Tad SKOTNICKI made a similar point when he noted that ideationally metaphysical frameworks could be seen across all three cases. The main dispute is whether the term "primarily" was correct, or even useful, when I called the mode of codification in the European witchcraft case "primarily" empirical and the mode of codification in the MAO-era case "primarily" ideational. Or whether presenting these cases as two distinct modes of codification mistreated the cases. [45]

Upon reflection, I agree that the term "primarily" should only be used as a learning and heuristic device rather than a categorical distinction. During the research phase, I attempted to use my empirical mode of codification to interpret the Chinese MAO-era case, and I found it difficult to do so. Only after I used a different "logic" (i.e., the ideational mode of codification) did I understand what I was missing: Distinctive, nuanced "logical" differences enabled the European witchcraft and the MAO-era idea systems somewhat differently. In my analysis, I

discovered that it is not so much the overlapping part of the Venn diagram but rather non-overlapping features that caused the "horror" in each of these two cases. Ideas about witches were latent in Christian theology and metaphysics across much of Europe, but it was only when the idea system made an empirical turn that it started a wholly different dynamic, which later became understood as "witch-hunts" (LEVACK, 2013 [1987], pp.1-2, 75-92). Prosecutions in the Middle-ages may be horrible qualitatively (with their trials by ordeals), but the elaborate "modernist" mode of empirical codification *multiplied* both the scale and intensity of the horror. [46]

In the Chinese case, by contrast, I was not suggesting the forgetting of the various scientific and empirical advancements that took place during the MAO Zedong era, such as successes in industrialization, the development of nuclear technology, and the launching of the first Chinese satellite. However, I found that it was the ideational codification activities that allowed the system to get out of hand. Perhaps Aminda SMITH's ongoing research examining MAO-era scientists can shed light on whether these mistakes can be located in the science or in the ideology of the Great Leap Forward, and perhaps there is a mixture of both. "Revolution and Witchcraft" listed the crimes of the official PENG Zhen as an example (CHANG, pp.221-228). Some pieces of evidence in this example appear "empirical" (i.e., they would fit the current legal definition of corruption), e.g., PENG Zhen using his official position to move a chandelier from a government building into his own house. If a significantly long list of these acts were gathered as evidence, then I would have classified the mode of codification as more empirical. But alongside these "empirical" charges of corruption, there was an attempt to label PENG Zhen and his wife for their "ideational" counterrevolutionary activities. Pieces of evidence like his family playing with cats in an ugly manner were included alongside other evidence of misconduct. I suggest that this latter type of "ideational" claims enabled the qualitative "horror" dynamic in the societal arena. Information about little things could be turned into signs of immorality and elevated into out-of-proportion accusations. These processes take a number of minor steps, and eventually PENG Zhen's "list of crimes" became the equivalent of being "killed by a thousand cuts" (CHANG, p.228). A finer point here is that in such an intensely discursive environment, empirical evidence of legal crimes (e.g., misuse of official power or monetary corruption) was easily *also* evidence of the ideational charges. So even when someone notices "empirical" evidence in these cases, I would argue that it was how this information became incorporated into ideationally driven codification that characterized the "horror" aspect of the case. [47]

In short, the horror was not a stacking up of evidence that converted empirical information into empirical datasets and therefore sustained the empirical happenings. In the Chinese case, the compilation of evidence was directed toward showing how a person, an act, or a situation matched—or did not match—an ideational construct. The process took the detailed work of codification, which was separated into many steps, and there was a lot of "ideational" wiggle room available to the actors (even if they exerted certainty about their ontological assessments). Aminda SMITH's mention of the rape account is powerful, as it

shows that this flexible idea system can also "empower" people to make sense of diverse life scenarios. "Horror" is not the only potential or outcome released by revolutionary idea systems. The ontological reality of the revolution was tied to many things other than unpleasant and intense events. [48]

5.4 Additional concerns raised by the critics

5.4.1 General unevenness between cases

As mentioned before, the cases in "Revolution and Witchcraft*"* are somewhat "uneven." The timespan of the cases varies from 300 to 30 to 3 years, and some of them rely upon primary texts and front-stage data more than others. My rationale for choosing the cases was a heavily "inductive" logic of case selection. I selected those that allowed me to see how an idea system operates over a period of time. A weakness of this approach is that the three cases may not look "neat" to readers, thereby making them and their juxtaposition harder to process. But the advantage of diverse case selection is that it allows me to more fully demonstrate how idea systems operate in different contexts, and the different codification models that other researchers may apply to different data types, time scales, and foci. Scholars could look at how elites construct idea systems with a massive informational apparatus, or they can see how "ordinary folks"—like shopkeepers, farmers, children, etc.—operate these systems. In doing so, they may encounter different kinds of data materials—such as the seemingly "extratextual" materials in the European witch-hunt case versus the comparatively more "textual" materials in the Chinese MAO-era case. Scholars may see codification dynamics from a 300-year timespan to observe the cumulative and adaptive outcomes, or they can zero into a single episode to see the intensity that goes into coding individual arguments and accounts. [49]

5.4.2 Emphasis on rationality and intellect

I have privileged themes of "rationality" over "non-rational" elements and processes (such as the role of emotions in argumentation) in my analysis. Clearly, I covered many subjects who felt very passionate, angry, righteous, scared, and so forth when making their claims. Other scholars may be fascinated by how non-rational factors created horrors and drove disasters. However, in "Revolution and Witchcraft," I tried to show that beneath these seemingly non-rational forces, rationality—and I mean rigorous rationality—was at work concomitantly. The activated logics of idea systems came into play by organizing "non-rational" elements into codified systems. Without the methodical rationality of the idea system, the "non-rational" process might not have gotten very far. [50]

I took this position in contrast to scholars like Gustave LE BON (1960 [1895]), who wrote on the "crowd" mentality or those who try to simply attribute the European witch-hunts and the Cultural Revolution to maleficent actors (i.e., per the popular expression, "bad things happen because of bad people"). Through case details, I showed how big errors arise through multiple small steps and layers of codification. These steps were conducted by all kinds of people—by

good and bad reasoners, by ethical and unethical actors. Powerful idea systems provided a uniquely powerful "language" (in the sense of a code or semiotic system). These "languages" opened a doorway, allowing "non-rational" elements —such as self-interest, moral urges, psychical desires, deep identities—to assume the form of organized *patterns*. In turn, the patterns enabled actors to construct "evidence"—evidence in HUSSERL's sense (1931 [1913])—not just in their own mind, but in manners that conceivably made sense to an audience (another social member, and possibly many more), who could then act on the patterns. [51]

Ethnomethodological scholars often refrain themselves from differentiating between kind of rationalities (e.g., scientific vs. everyday) in hierarchical terms. From my perspective, the paradigm is incredibly open and useful due to this orientation. Ethnomethodological scholars in science studies do not privilege scientific practices over other forms of reasoning (EISENMANN, MLYNÁŘ, TUROWETZ & RAWLS, 2024, pp.2724-2725; LYNCH, 1993); and GARFINKEL has expressed the idea that "witches" should be studied as socially achieved objects and constructions (EISENMANN et al., 2024; RAWLS, TUROWETZ, EISENMANN & HOEY, 2020). Building upon GARFINKEL's suggestion, I argue that readers of my European case study (CHANG, pp.29-142), would find that the idea system helps social members construct witches as achieved objects. AU-YEUNG (2025, §3) has described this approach as "a middle-path between holistic causality and the agency of social actors." [52]

However, I did not assume complete intellectual equality expressed by all social actors in different social moments. In "Revolution and Witchcraft," I attempted to capture moments where high-level human intellect met idea abuse; my attempt was embedded with my judgment and sensibility regarding what counted as high-level intellect, complex cognition, and idea abuse. People may abuse ideas by being sloppy thinkers and thus release horrors. However, if bad outcomes occur even when—or especially when—people are not being sloppy, the scale of horror is potentially higher. In the book, I questioned the perennial belief that human "reason" can safeguard us from doing horrible things. And it even turned that belief on its head: Such a faculty may be part of the problem. In sum, I believe that my embedded hierarchical distinctions helped me capture the phenomenon of interest much better than if I had uniformly applied an agnostic or egalitarian assumption. [53]

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5.4.3 Front vs. back stages as research sites

The analogy of front and back stages originates from Erving GOFFMAN's (1959) dramaturgical model of social life. If researchers want to understand the causes of a historical event "as a whole," they may want all the information they can gather about backstage activities. For my study, however, which is about idea systems and the patterns of horror produced using idea systems, the front stage is *where the action is*. In my argument, legitimization of an idea system must be done in public. People must propose ideas in public, defend them in public, and make transformations about them in public. Using John L. AUSTIN's (1962, pp.98-107) classic terms, social actors do "perlocutionary" and "illocutionary" acts (in part using "locutionary" acts). In "Revolution and Witchcraft," I presented some backstage materials—mainly to make readers consider alternative possibilities as to why a physical event might be occurring. But the main phenomenon under examination pertained to humans' abuse of ideas—and these acts are often done in "public" contexts, especially when conducted by institutional actors. In the book, many occurrences in the "backstage" could influence outcomes: Governments deliberately hiding or altering information; witch torturers accepting bribes; and self-proclaimed revolutionaries behaving hypocritically in their personal lives. Researchers may not cover the *full* chains of idea codification by looking at the front-stage alone. However, if the phenomenon under investigation is idea abuse, and if observers can see patterns in the front-stage data, and if they also can explain those patterns in ways that are not otherwise obvious, then they can carry forth sociology of knowledge with materials that are "objective" and available to readers. [54]

5.4.4 Micro-macro leaps as a "gestalt problem"

Micro-macro linkages are central to ethnomethodology (MEHAN & WOOD, 1983 [1975]), and social scientists of diverse methodologies have addressed the issue in different ways (LEMPERT, 2024). At the beginning of "Revolution and Witchcraft," I characterized the "gestalt problem" (p. 7), which was my take on the micro-macro question. I suggested that a significant barrier for scholars of ideology is the problem of *operationalization*. How can researchers account for the "gestalt" relationship between the "whole" and the "parts"? I therefore had to determine when a spoken word or a gap between information and stated claim belonged to what ERICKSON (2004, p.198) labeled a "species of local social action." I wanted readers to connect this "species" to patterns of everyday relevance. A special strength arises when scholars employ an analytic "microscope" to replay case details in front of readers who can then "generalize" the process to and from their own experiences using their own empirical faculty (p.104). If the readers can connect what I display through my analytic microscope to other local or global phenomena, and perhaps they can even utilize some of my analytic procedures, then my study may have generalizability in helping others to see micro-macro relations. [55]

In the book's introduction, I stated that I hope readers will have the experience of "connecting microscopic pictures of discourse and large-scale social significance"

in order to "create a wider bridge between the abstract and concrete approaches, and *seemingly* 'microscopic' and 'macroscopic' investigations" (CHANG, p.24, italics added). In presenting these linkages, I made choices informed by the Hegelian-Marxist dialectical tradition. In particular, I found inspiration in Hugh MEHAN's unique mode of studying the "politics of representation" (see MEHAN, 1991, 1993, 1997; MEHAN & ROBERT, 2001; MEHAN & WILLS, 1988; MEHAN, NATHANSON & SKELLY, 1990; ROSEN & MEHAN, 2003), which—per my reading—was undergirded with a dialectical method. MEHAN and his collaborators have identified how contradictions of broad relevance may exist within a debate, how local actors articulated oppositional or conflicting theses to resolve these apparent contradictions, and how the contradictions were therefore reconciled, overcome, or suppressed during the course of interaction. As I was looking at how "horrors" were constituted through codification, I was mindful of codification activities that would bring contradictions of broad ("macroscopic") relevance to the surface. [56]

By assembling the codification model, in "Revolution and Witchcraft" I offered a major methodological trick for dealing with questions of scale. I loosely adapt a computer programming metaphor in conceiving this codification model; I say "loosely" because humans' codification is much more complicated than current computers. By this metaphor, readers can see ideas as something like lines of programming codes that operate in the contexts and systems (both hardware and software) of people. If a single line of programming is missing, that may cause a small snag; but if a program contains numerous gaps, or if a particularly critical expression is mis-formed, then an otherwise coherent thought may not be successfully outputted. Just because an expression exists does not mean that the expression matters, or that the same expression could not exist in another format. Thus, I strove to capture variants of operations using case details. I tried to show how many members—or institutions—learn to enact the "logical" steps that make idea systems possible. My arguments are not predicated on capturing entire event series—especially across a wide expanse of historical and archival data. But if I take chunks of partially written expressions (as afforded by the available archive) and map out a programmatic picture, then I can run the program for readers, and they may get a cognitive sense of how the program works. When readers learn to see how a "logic" is comprehended, operated, and dealt with by social actors in real-life settings, they begin to understand how that logic enables certain outputs and consequences. [57]

5.4.5 Applicability of the codification model

Arguably, the codification model is best at analyzing idea systems constructed through densely-packed information and tied to happenings, and where public ideas are assembled in an intricate organization. The model is less useful for idea systems that are not so tightly or intricately organized, or where public information is not dense. Musicians, writers, and artists may conduct idea-codification in their works. Charles BUKOWSKI (1993) and Emily DICKINSON (1998 [1975]) are two writers who I find meaningful due to their ability to turn the worlds into different sets of codes. Sets of codes help these artists create universes that people can experience and re-live. However, I cannot use the codification model to show how they do so between the lines of their words, at least not readily. My codification mode may therefore not be the best tool for capturing every codification activity. But, even in non-obvious settings, the model may serve as a brainstorming device, which helps us imagine creative idea-construction activities with greater clarity. [58]

J.R. OSBORN, in particular, has engaged me to specify other areas where the codification model may be applicable, even going as far as pushing me (and his students) to apply the model to contemporary practices of idea codification by companies like Expedia, BiliBili, and Whole Foods Market.[5] These collaborations have reinforced my notion that the model has wide potential applications. Subcultures (e.g., music and gaming communities) thrive on people constituting unique idea systems, with codifications playing to the specifics of group life (FINE & HALLET, 2022). Interactionists may utilize the model to examine how friendship and love relations are maintained by a delicate idea system—that the "rules" of codifying acceptable ideas are dynamically constituted and reconstituted between participants. At the broad social-political historical level, entire cities, nations, and civilizations may be built or fashioned upon different idea systems or modes of idea codification. Wherever scholars or analysts sense that "the code" and codification processes are affecting social life, the codification model may serve as a tool for illumination. [59]

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5   Expedia is a global travel technology company based in the United States. Whole Foods Market is a higher-end grocery retailer in the United States that features organic, natural, and more premium products. BiliBili is a hybrid entertainment platform based in China, with the combined characteristics of video-sharing, streaming, and social media platforms.

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