

Introduction

Michael Barber

Saint Louis University, Missouri

michael.barber@slu.edu

From June 3-7, 2012, The Fifth Conference of The International Alfred Schutz Circle for Phenomenology and Interpretive Social Science was hosted digitally by Saint Louis University. The title of the Conference was “The Experience of the Stranger: The Struggle to Find a Home and the Struggle to Welcome the Stranger.” The Conference took its origin from Alfred Schutz’s 1944 essay “The Stranger: An Essay in Social Psychology,” but the title suggested the possibility of the bi-directionality of the experience, that is, how the Stranger experiences approaching an in-group and how an in-group experiences the Stranger approaching it. All the papers contained in this volume of *Schutzian Research* were presented at this conference, and their authors revised their papers before sending them to the journal for publication here.

On June 4, Dr. George Yancy of Emory University presented the first keynote address of the conference that appears here under the title of “The Danger of White Innocence: Being a Stranger in One’s Own ‘Home.’” In Yancy’s essay, which is written as a delivered keynote, he develops the idea that whiteness functions as a transcendental norm that shapes the meaning structure of Black-being-in-the-world so that Blacks are made to feel like strangers in their own home. Yancy presents various ways in which Black people under the white gaze are subject to white typifications that rob them of their subjectivity and undermine any possibility of an intersubjective relationship with them. He records, for instance, the violent verbal responses he received after writing his letter “Dear White America” in the *New York Times*—responses that the conference participants found appalling—and he describes the terror and discomfort a white woman experiences and barely conceals when he, as a Black male, enters an elevator with her. This paper captures the tortuous in-group/

out-group dialectic that the Black in-group struggles with in the face of the white out-group's typifications and relevances. Yancy's essay converges with and deepens Schutz's own essay on racial inequality and suggests how Blacks are not unfamiliar with the kind of genocide that led Schutz to depart Austria.

Dr. Thomas Eberle, Professor at the University of St. Gallen, delivered on June 6 the second key-note address, entitled "A Study in Xenological Phenomenology: Alfred Schutz's Stranger Revisited." Eberle examines the theme of the Stranger as it has appeared in history, explores the meaning of the strangeness and the Stranger in Schutz's own work, and demonstrates how they have much to do with marking out the limits of what can be known in social relationships in general, even within in-groups. Eberle articulates the various distinctive dimensions of Schutz's methodology at work in his understanding the Stranger. At the end of his paper, Eberle raises penetrating questions about the lack of clear evaluative attitudes and the marginalization of emotions in Schutz's work. He recommends that Schutzians include what Schutz neglects or deemphasizes and that they go beyond textual analysis to study the things themselves. If Yancy insightfully brings a phenomenological paradigm to bear on the concrete case of those suffering racist subordination, in a way that converges with Eberle's recommendation that we return to the things themselves, Eberle expands Schutz's work on the Stranger to encompass the history of topos of the Stranger, strangeness in general, the general limits of knowing another, and even important themes lying in the neglected horizons of the Schutzian paradigm.

Hermilio Santos and Priscila Susin, of the Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul, in "Relevance and Biographical Experience in Urban Social Research," contribute to a burgeoning literature on how a biographical approach to acting subjects, whose relevance-systems are shaped by their history, can enhance social empirical research. Interviews that focus on biographical narratives flow from Schutz's methodology and make possible a scientific grasp of subjective meanings. Following Schutz's emphasis on the importance of the attitude of the social scientist, the authors stress that investigators require both openness and open-endedness in their biographical interviews to grasp accurately the other's meaning and to avoid imposing their own meanings on the other. They proceed then to lay out in a detailed manner the process they implemented and the results arrived at in interviewing women inhabitants of a *favela* in Rio de Janeiro. Through a summary of narrative interviews with one woman, the authors show the relevance of her biography for an understanding of intra-Brazilian migratory patterns, the social history of the *favela*, and the struggles of women across generations for their families and neighbors.

Erik Garrett, from Duquesne University, commences with Schutz's essay "The Stranger" and argues against Aron Gurwitsch's critique of that essay insofar as the dynamics of in-group/out-group interaction that Schutz delineates characterize encounters with strangers of every type, including refugees and immigrants. Garrett proceeds to show how the Levinasian concept of fecundity, in which one's child both belongs to the parents and yet differs from and is strange to its parents, can contribute to the whole discussion of the Stranger. Similarly, Husserl's notions of the *Heimwelt* and *Fremdwelt* illustrates the kinds of adaptations and adjustments one's home-world is called upon to undertake when faced with another from another world. Garrett brings out the ethical dimensions involved in the encounter with the Stranger, beyond the epistemological puzzles into which a meeting with a Stranger catapults us.

Thanks are due to Montaque Frayejohn Reynolds and Christopher Holland, both from the Department of Philosophy at Saint Louis University. Without their persistent and careful editorial assistance, this volume would not have been possible.