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STRUCTURE VERSUS NONSTRUCTURE AT  
THE POVERELLO CENTER

by

Harley C. Schreck, Jr.

B.A., University of Idaho, 1970

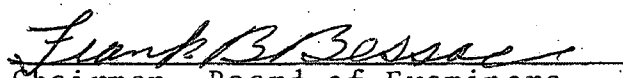
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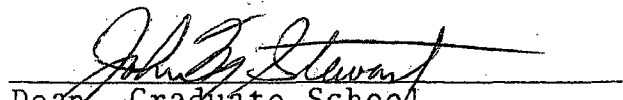
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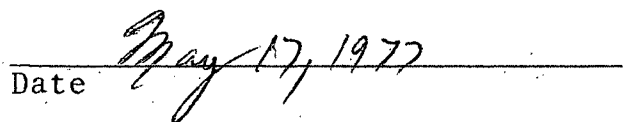
UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

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## ABSTRACT

Schreck, Jr., Harley C., M.A., Spring 1977

Anthropology

Structure Versus Nonstructure at the Poverello Center (106 pp.)

Director: Frank B. Bessac *F.B.*

Society is not always composed of closely interwoven statuses and roles. One often finds institutions that are inhabited by social beings who seem not to fit into normal structured society. This paper is concerned with one such institution and the exploration of the character of the social beings who are found there, the relationships built up between these social beings, and the relationship between these beings and society. The research for this study was conducted from January through June 1976, at the Poverello Center in Missoula, Montana. The data was gathered using a combination of library research, participant observation, and interviews. Included in this paper is an ethnographic description of the clientele of the Center. It was found that one may describe three types of social domains and that there are significant "maps" that relate these domains to one another.

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And, lastly, I would like to thank both the workers and clients at the Poverello Center for their patience and cooperation, without which this thesis would not have been possible.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This study was concerned with the various actions and interactions of persons who frequented the Poverello Center in Missoula, Montana, an institution dedicated to serving the poor and needy. I first became interested in the Poverello Center as a possible area for research because of a controversy over its location on Pine Street, a tree-lined boulevard running through a residential neighborhood consisting of stately old homes. I saw this conflict as a unique example of society showing its underpinnings by being caught off guard. Unfortunately, by the time I began to investigate the matter the conflict was almost played out and a move to a less controversial location was about to take place.

I visited the Center during its lunch-hour operation, talked with Ms. Kenney, director of the Center at the time, read all the newspaper accounts that I could find concerning the Center, and tried to contact persons who had significant knowledge of its history and operation. From this research and some initial observations I became convinced that the lunch-hour scene itself had significant merit for study.

It was immediately noticeable that the clients of the Poverello Center differed from what is generally expected from Missoula residents. It was also noticeable that a wide variety of persons made up the clientele. I became interested in the network of relationships that was being built up among the clients, the relationships between the volunteer workers and the clients, and the place the Center occupied in relation to normal Missoula society.

Through researching and trying to find answers to these rather broad questions I hoped to be able to say something significant about what was happening at the Center and in society. This paper is concerned with how I attempted to research these questions and is a report on what I found.

### History of the Center

The Poverello Center, Incorporated is a non-profit corporation carrying out various acts of charity to those in need in Missoula, Montana. It was initially formed by members of the third order of St. Francis, a group of Catholic lay people who have dedicated themselves to follow the example of St. Francis of Assisi. Since its initial conception, persons of many faiths, or lack of faiths, and from many parts of life have participated in serving at the Center. The purpose of the Poverello Center is:

To serve the poor through the practice of the corporal works of mercy--"feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless. . ."



To provide a meal to all people that come to the center.  
 All people who come seeking help will be helped.  
 To provide clothing to those that need it.  
 To provide spiritual guidance when needed and desired.  
 To involve all people in the community, regardless of faith, in an effort to demonstrate through Christian action that people do care, and do recognize that the unfortunate are many times powerless to help themselves.  
 To coordinate with all other social agencies. In dealing with people problems, it is important to establish positive contact with other programs established in the community.  
 To extend to our fellow man love and concern in his hour of need, so that each may know that truly we are all brothers regardless of race, color or creed.  
 To be a light to the world and in so doing, sow hope in the hearts of those that are less fortunate than we are.

(Poverello Center, Inc., 1975:1)

How the Poverello Center became a viable and lasting reality is rather interesting. The person who was centrally responsible for its conception and actual formation was Ms. Kenney, a local resident of Missoula. According to Ms. Kenney, she first became interested in something like the Poverello Center around 1957. At that time Ms. Kenney was living in Spokane, Washington, and she heard of a Franciscan Brother who had dedicated himself to feeding the poor in Spokane. Ms. Kenney, however, was not yet in a position to become involved in such an endeavor.

In 1973, Ms. Kenney was living in Missoula and still had a strong desire to organize a similar activity. She talked with the Franciscans in Missoula and found support for this interest, and a loose association of persons

interested in this work was formed and called the Poverello Center. Although these people were third order Franciscans, they decided from the very beginning that the support for such a place must be community-wide so as to involve all segments of the community. Ms. Kenney and her fellow workers contacted the Knights of Columbus and secured their permission to use their meeting hall to prepare and serve noonday meals to any persons who would show up. At first the number of persons who utilized the service was small. As news of the service circulated, more and more people began to show up, until, by the latter part of 1974, it was obvious that the Knights of Columbus meeting hall was inadequate for this work.

In the latter part of 1974, Ms. Kenney and others in the community who were involved in these activities, in particular the Christian churches, began to put out feelers as to the feasibility of locating and purchasing a private residence in which to base this work. The response was highly favorable and money was collected in support of such a move. A residence was located at 518 East Pine Street in Missoula which appeared to be ideally situated for such an enterprise. Inquiries were made and everything seemed right for the move. The Pine Street residence was bought and on January 30, 1975 the operations of the Poverello Center transferred to the new location.

The operation grew rapidly at the new location. There

was quite a bit of support from most of the community but, as the number of clients using the Poverello Center increased, some of the neighbors of the new location became alarmed by the number and types of people who were using the Center. Complaints were made informally to the City Council, and it was questioned as to whether the Poverello Center violated the zoning standards in the neighborhood.

During this time period (April to June 1975), there was much discussion both in the Missoulian and at the Council about the issue. Among those neighbors who opposed the location of the Poverello Center, there was much indignation over the attitudes expressed towards them in public. They pointed out that when the Poverello Center was moved to Pine Street no one contacted them and asked their opinion of the move or even explained what was happening. They said that they did not at all object to the purposes of the Poverello Center, but on the contrary, they supported it and some actually donated money. What they did object to was the location of the Poverello Center in their neighborhood. They asked whether critics of their position would support the Poverello Center being moved to their neighborhoods. They stated that they did not appreciate strangers in their neighborhood, and, lastly, they could cite numerous examples of what they considered to be improper behavior by clients of the Center.

Persons who supported the Poverello Center also had a long list of arguments. Most of these arguments followed

rather altruistic lines. The supporters expressed an urge to help poor people. They accused the ones who opposed the location of the Poverello Center as being rather unkind and misled.

The matter went before the Council who refused to act on the grounds that a formal complaint was not lodged. Fred Root, the City Attorney, took the matter of a zone violation under consideration and decided that, indeed, the Poverello Center was in violation of zoning regulations. The City Council declined to comment upon Root's ruling, thereby tacitly supporting the decision. At this point the Center had three options. One, they could try to get a change in the zoning status. Two, they could ignore the ruling and wait for someone to bring charges against them. Then they could fight the issue in court as to whether there was an actual violation of the zoning regulation. Three, they could heed the decision and look for a new location. This last possibility was the one they decided upon because the officials of the Poverello Center felt that to do otherwise would tend to fragment the community.

To make matters more complicated, it was learned during this period that the Poverello Center, which before this time had just been a loose association of people dedicated to a common line of action, must be made into a non-profit corporation for a number of reasons, including owning property.

A search was made for a new location, and it was found that the Spruce Apartment Building at 535 Ryman Avenue was available. Many things seemed right for the move. The location was good, for it was fairly close to both the freeway and the tracks, thereby making it convenient for the transients using such facilities; it was close to many of the residences of the regular clients of the Poverello Center; and it was still within the downtown area so the older people could walk to it. Perhaps the most important thing for the Center was that it was zoned for light commercial use, therefore no zoning conflicts were foreseen, and none arose as it turned out.

The Pine Street Poverello Center was put up for sale, and monies were solicited, mainly through the local churches. The Pine Street location was sold quickly and enough monies were collected to complete the transaction of the new property on Ryman Avenue. On January 15, 1975 the Poverello Center opened operations at 535 Ryman Avenue.

#### Current Operation

Over the years since its conception, operations of the Poverello Center grew in response to various needs and visions. At the time of this research there were many activities located at the Poverello Center. The first and primary activity is to provide one good, hot meal at lunch time, Sunday through Friday. Meals are served from noon to

two o'clock in the afternoon. Sometimes as many as one hundred or more meals are served at one lunch period, but the average number of servings is about eighty. Another service of the Center is to provide a few apartments for the needy. There are two categories of people using this service. The first includes those persons who stay on a rather long-term basis. These are usually older persons who lived in the apartments before they were exchanged. It was decided that it would be unkind to force them to move. The second category of persons using this facility are those persons who need a place to "crash" for one or two nights. Not everyone who asks to stay is allowed to do so. The decision to let them stay is a fairly subjective one that takes into consideration how dangerous the person appears to be, how much room there is, and other factors. An evening meal is provided for the permanent residents. During the time period I was researching the Poverello Center, the Missoula Mental Health Center provided a psychiatric social worker who was available at the Center during the lunch period on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday for those who desired his services. The original plan was that by having this man located at the Poverello Center, where it was thought that many needy people assembled, he would be in a very good position to establish contact and thereby direct them to proper care. By the time I left, this service was dropped because of a lack of response from the clients. Also,

a chapel is located in one of the rooms of the Center. This is to allow both the resident and the clients a place to worship, pray, and meditate. The Center gives out boxes of food to families in need and maintains a clothing bank (where clothes are available free of charge) in the basement of a local church. Plans are in the offing for constructing a building in back of the Center for the location of the clothing bank and an area where clothes could be mended and reconditioned for sale. Also, there are plans for a dormitory to be built on the upper floors of the Center to allow the Center room to expand their services for those in need of housing.

At its new location, the Poverello Center seems stable and is not likely to run into opposition from the community.

As with most social events a seemingly simple scene, such as serving lunch to a group of people, becomes quite complicated as one looks at it carefully. The activities relevant to the scene begin well before the noon commencement of serving. A few hours ahead of time, Ms. Kenney or a volunteer worker begins to prepare the meal for the day in the kitchen. Since the meal depends upon the foodstuffs that have been recently donated, this is often a time of great creativity as the decisions as to what will be served are made. Closer to noon one or two other volunteers show up to set tables, prepare the coffee and milk table, and to serve the food. This is a rather interesting time, for it

is the one time when the workers are not in view of the clients. This is a time for the workers to interact freely in matters that could not be touched upon later. Personal business, attitudes about working at the Center, and the Poverello Center itself are frequent topics of conversation.

Meanwhile, in the alley adjacent to the dining room entrance, a small group of clients has gathered (unless the weather is unfriendly). The group is usually composed of older local men. They hang out talking about local interests and waiting for the doors to be opened.

When noon comes the workers and clients begin to assume their respective roles. The food is served from a window in the wall that separates the dining area from the kitchen. The clients receive a plate of food and a dessert at the window and then pick up their drinks at a table set up in the dining area. The clients then sit at one of five tables. The seating arrangement depends on many factors. One, of course, is which seats are available. Other considerations seem to be who is sitting at the various tables, whether or not one wants to sit by anyone at all, the feeling that some seats are situated better than others for rather subjective reasons, and being in or out of the traffic area.

The crowd grows until about 1:00 p.m. at which time the number of people at the Poverello Center begins to decrease. There are groups of people who habitually arrive, eat, and leave together. There are loners who habitually come in



alone and leave alone. There are new people, visitors from the community, transients, and, occasionally, family groups who come in. The combinations of people who use the Center are quite varied.

In the dining area itself anything can happen. People eat lunch, of course, but the Poverello Center is also a communication center, a place to meet friends or to hear the latest news. For some, the Center serves therapeutic needs. There are some persons there who will take time to listen and to try to help if a person has a particular problem. There are conflicts between various people that are played out at the Center. Friendships are made and lost. Many of the people know each other from other areas, so the Center is only a continuation of their relationship. As is easily seen, it is a compact social space.

Adjacent to the dining area is a small sitting room, or lounge. This is a scene of an interesting set of interactions. Here plans are usually made about the rest of the day, people wait until their friends arrive or finish lunch, and some people hang out in lieu of being anywhere else.

As two o'clock approaches things begin to wind down. The action moves from the Center to the street, the bars, the tracks, the highway, school, or any one of many other places. The Poverello lunch hour is just one scene in the lives of the clients of the Poverello Center, but it is the one scene that they all share, and therein lies the significance.

## CHAPTER II

### THEORY AND METHODS

As with most social situations the mass of incoming data would seem confusing unless we had a theoretical framework to hang it on. In looking at the lunch hour scene, I found myself asking three questions concerning what was happening. The first one was, who are these people and how do they relate to the larger society? If we look at society as being the integrated whole that it is so often assumed to be in anthropology, how do these people fit in? The second question was, what is happening among the clients themselves? What kind of interactions are taking place? It was rather obvious that there was quite a diverse group of people there. How do they relate to one another? A third question that I asked myself was, what is the relationship between the volunteer workers and the clients at the Poverello Center? Though this might seem related to the second question, upon closer examination it is quite different. The clients are all united by being clients. The volunteer workers are separated by their actions, status, and a physical wall from the clients.

Through perusing the literature I encountered three lines of approach which seemed to be of use in looking at these

questions. To understand the interaction between the clients I found the work of George Herbert Mead in symbolic interaction theory to be quite useful. To help explain the relationship of the clients to the volunteers, and vice versa, I found Erving Goffman's dramaturgical approach to be good. Lastly, I found Victor Turner's discussion of liminality and *communitas* to be helpful in explaining the center-society relationship.

Role theory has a long history in anthropology in relation to the short time period that anthropology has been in existence. Linton, in the Study of Man, first defined the concepts of role and status. A status is seen as a position in a particular pattern. Associated with this particular position are a number of rights and duties. In other words, a status is a definitional location for a person in society. An example would be the definition of a policeman which defines a status for a person. A role is the dynamic aspect of a status. It is putting the actual rights and duties of a status into effect. The actual behavior of the policeman is considered to be the role he is "playing." There are a number of associated ideas included with these two terms. One is that they reduce the ideal patterns for social life to individualistic terms, that is, they are to serve as models for an individual so he can play out the appropriate behaviors. Another idea associated with these definitions is that the more perfectly the individuals are adjusted to

their statuses and roles the more perfectly society will function. Also, there is a distinction between ascribed statuses and roles, or those roles and statuses assigned to individuals without reference to individual abilities, and achieved statuses and roles, or those statuses and roles which require special qualities (Linton 1936:113-115).

Since Linton's first definitions, much has been done with role theory. It has been pointed out that

. . . each social status involves not a single associated role, but an array of roles. (Merton 1957:110)

This array of roles has been termed a role set and is defined as:

. . . a complement of role-relationships in which persons are involved by virtue of occupying a particular position. (Merton 1957:110)..

The inclusion of role set in role theory has helped explain or account for the diversity of behaviors associated with a status.

An important point that should be stressed is that roles are groupings of behaviors. It is most important to realize the context of an action before assigning it any importance or value. An action might mean entirely different things in different contexts. Also, in role theory interaction is important. Whether we talk about role sets or consistent behavior, what defines the role is behavior in relation to others. (Turner 1962:24-25).

Role theory has shed quite a bit of insight on human interaction, but at the Poverello Center one runs into a problem. On any particular day there is a unique group of people assembled at the Poverello lunch hour. There are regulars who come every day, to be sure, but there are large numbers of new people every day. What we have is a very dynamic situation with the particular patterns altering continually. What is needed is some theoretical approach that allows for and expects that diversity. The work of George Herbert Mead and his students does just that.

George Herbert Mead was a social philosopher at the University of Chicago. He is called a seminal mind for he laid the initial ideas for quite a large body of theory about human interactions. Even though he was not a prolific writer much material has been gathered and assembled posthumously. The aspect of his work that will be of concern here is his work in symbolic interaction. Interaction theory concentrates upon an examination of social life in terms of "encounters" between social persons in particular situations. It is concerned with showing how individuals modify behavior in terms of their perceptions of situations, their self-perceptions, and their perceptions of how the other social person expects them to act (Graburn 1971:290).

Mead dealt with symbolic interactions. Symbolic interaction is defined as a peculiar and distinctive character of interactions as they take place between human beings. It is

peculiar because humans interpret and define each other's actions instead of merely reacting. Their responses are based on the meanings that they give to these actions. Thus, human interactions are mediated by symbols. An important point is that humans have selves and these selves can be the objects of their own actions. Thus, significance is given to self by making it an object (that is, one is self becomes an object not a subject). Also, actions are constructed, that is, they are not just a release. Human behavior is not merely a result of environmental pressures, attitudes, stimuli, motives, and values, but on the contrary, it also arises from how one interprets and handles these things in the action which one is constructing (Blumer 1962:180-183).

What Mead and his followers said is that actions take place in a social context. Group action takes the form of fitting together individual lines of action. Each individual aligns his action to the action of others by ascertaining what it is they are doing or what they intend to do. This is what is meant by the term role-taking (Blumer 1962:184).

Role-taking is the very important concept introduced by Mead. This concept affords the dynamic quality so needed in studying a rather fluid situation like the Poverello Center.

There are really two facets of role-taking. One is that it is the process of grouping behavior into consistent

units which correspond to generalizable types of factors. The other facet is that one organizes behavior vis-a-vis relevant others (Turner 1962:32-37). Thus we can see that role-taking involves shaping one's behavior in relation to an idealized role and in relation to others.

An important aspect of this concept is that the unity of a role cannot consist merely of a set of behaviors for the same behaviors may define various roles. The unifying element is some assignment of purpose or sentiment to the other.

Role-taking involves selective perception of the actions of another and a great deal of selective emphasis, organized about some purpose or sentiment attributed to the other. (Turner 1962:28).

The importance of role-taking lies in the realization that roles are ways to relate the other-roles in a situation. A role cannot exist without one or more relevant other roles toward which it is oriented. Thus we can see that interaction is a tentative process--one is constantly testing one's conception of the other's role.

The idea of role-taking shifts emphasis away from the simple process of enacting a prescribed role to devising a performance on the basis of an imputed other-role. (Turner 1962:23).

Thus we can see that:

Roles "exist" in varying degrees of concreteness and consistency, while the individual confidently frames his behavior as if they had unequivocal existence and clarity. The result is that in attempting from time to

time to make aspects of the roles explicit he is creating and modifying roles as well as merely bringing them to light: the process is not only role-taking but role-making. (Turner 1962:22).

Mead felt this process of role-taking to be central to the understanding of society. As he said:

. . . the very organization of the self-conscious community is dependent upon individuals taking the attitude of the other individuals. (Mead 1934:256).

By examining the process of role-taking at the Center, I hope to finish with a good idea of what has been termed the "Social Self," which is defined as:

. . . self [in the thoughts of both Mead and Buber] is a product of social or interpersonal relations involving meeting, symbolic communication, or dialogue. (Pfuetze 1961:5-6).

Erving Goffman has presented a theoretical approach to studying encounters that promises to be helpful in understanding the worker-client relationship. Goffman maintains that society is organized around two main principles:

Society is organized on the principle that any individual who possesses certain social characteristics has a moral right to expect that others will value and treat him in a correspondingly appropriate way.

. . . an individual who implicitly or explicitly signifies that he has certain social characteristics ought to have this claim honored by others and ought in fact to be what he claims he is. (Goffman 1958:6).

These two principles are essential in using and understanding Goffman's approach to studying society, which he



calls a dramaturgical approach. As the name implies, this approach uses drama as an analogy in quite an effective manner to explain interactions. Essential to the use of this approach is to recognize the need for a social establishment to be delineated. A social establishment as used by Goffman is any place surrounded by fixed barriers to perception in which a particular kind of activity regularly takes place (Goffman 1958:15). Goffman is looking at social situations in which the action is focused upon itself. Clearly, the Poverello Center is a social establishment in these terms.

Within this social establishment we are dealing with impression management. It is seen that within a social establishment there exists a team of performers who cooperate to present a given definition of the situation (Goffman 1958: 15). In Goffman's terms:

. . . a set of individuals who co-operate in staging a single routine may be referred to as a performance team or, in short, a team. (Goffman 1958:48).

As Goffman says:

A performance, in the restricted sense in which I shall now use the term, is that arrangement which transforms an individual into a stage performer, the latter, in turn, being an object that can be looked at in the round and at length without offense, and looked at for engaging behavior, by persons in an "audience" role. . . . A line is ordinarily maintained between a staging area where the performance proper occurs and an audience region where the watchers are located. The central understanding

is that the audience has neither the right nor the obligation to participate directly in the dramatic action occurring on the stage, although it may express appreciation throughout in a manner that can be treated as not occurring by the beings which the stage performers present on stage. (Goffman 1974:124-125).

This given definition of the situation, or performance, includes a conception of one's own team and the audience, an assumption of ethos to be maintained by rules of politeness and decorum, a front and back stage region, and a more harmonious appearance to outsiders than may actually exist (Goffman 1958:15).

Implicit in all of this is the principle that audiences have the moral right to believe a person when he says he is something. The question of whether the audience and the performer believe the performance is essential to this discussion.

To further the belief that the audience has in the performance:

. . . a performer tends to conceal or underplay those activities, facts, and motives which are incompatible with an idealized version of himself and his products. In addition, a performer often engenders in his audience the belief that he is related to them in a more ideal way than is always the case. (Goffman 1958:30).

That the performance may in fact not be telling the whole truth could be easily understood.

As countless folk tales and initiation rites show, often the real secret behind the mystery is that there really is no mystery; the

real problem is to prevent the audience from learning this too. (Goffman 1958:46).

We must be careful at this point, however. To conceal the truth from the audience may not be, and indeed quite often is not, a dastardly plot to "con" someone into believing something that is not true. In fact, Goffman says that even though it is a rule that the audience should "believe" a performance the performer himself may not believe it. He might keep up the performance for self-interest, but he also might keep up the performance for what he perceives the good of the community to be (Goffman 1958:10-11).

The relationship between the audience and the performer is essential for this paper. Even though it is fairly clear that the Poverello Center is a social establishment and, therefore, is acceptable to be studied in these terms, it is not at all clear that the performers, if we consider the team of workers as performers, are really being observed that clearly by the audience, or the clients.

An interesting question to ask is what happens when a performer is taken in by his own performance? What happens when a performer becomes convinced that the reality that he is trying to project is the one and only reality? That is, what happens when the audience and performer are one? Goffman says that in this case the performer will have to:

. . . conceal from himself in his audience capacity the discreditable facts that he has had to learn about the performance. . . .  
(Goffman 1958:49).

This situation is much different than the case of the performer who goes "native." The performer has not joined the audience. As Goffman points out:

The obvious point must be stated if the team is to sustain the impression that it is fostering, then there must be some assurance that no individual will be allowed to join both the team and the audience. (Goffman 1958:58).

According to Goffman, there has to be a rigid and total separation of the front region, where the audience is and the performance is given, and the back region, where the performers drop the performance and relate to each other out of sight from the audience. Being a team member means that one is in a special relationship with other members of the team. Team members are in bonds of reciprocal dependence to one another. They are also familiar, that is they can drop their performances. It is obvious that the entire team is dependent on every member of the team to keep the performance viable and not commit any out-of-performance actions in view of the audience (Goffman 1958:50-51). Thus, when a performer goes out "front" with the audience and then returns to backstage regions we see a putting on and taking off of character (Goffman 1958:50-51).

We will look at how well this approach describes or explains what is happening at the Center. Do the performers believe the performance? Does the audience see the performance? Are the performers actually audience members?

As I observed the clients of the Poverello Center I began to see them as people who did not fit into normal structured society. These were people who were quite often definable by stating what they were not. In the work of Victor Turner I found material that seemed to speak quite clearly to this situation. Although Turner has done work in many fields, the work that I found most helpful to this research was that on liminal persons and *communitas*.

I was especially interested in liminal persons for, as I hope to show, the majority of the persons at the Poverello Center could quite clearly be defined as liminal. Liminal beings, in Turner's usage, are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremony. They are symbolized by symbols that ritualize social and cultural transitions, such as death, being in the womb, invisibility, darkness, bisexuality, wilderness, and eclipses (Turner 1969:95). Persons defined as being liminal can best be seen as persons who do not "fit" into a normal structured society. As Turner puts it:

The attributes of liminality or of liminal personae ("threshold people") are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. (Turner 1969:95).

To understand how Turner is using the concept of liminality it is rather important to understand how he defines social structure. In his usage social structure is thought of as a:

. . . superorganic arrangement of parts or positions that continues, with modifications, more or less gradual, through time. (Turner 1969:125).

In other words, Turner is talking about norms that are institutionalized and abstract.

Turner says that the characteristics of liminal persons are that they fall in the interstices of social structure, are on its margins, or occupy its lowest rungs (Turner 1969: 125). Thus, to find liminal persons, we must look towards areas where there is a setting aside of persons from normal society.

If we desire to contrast liminality with status, we might order such contrasts as follows:

<u>Liminal Characteristics</u>	<u>Status Characteristics</u>
Transition	State
Totality	Partiality
Homogeneity	Heterogeneity
Communitas	Structure
Equality	Inequality
Anonymity	Systems of Nomenclature
Absence of property	Property
Absence of status	Status
Nakedness or uniform clothing	Distinctions of clothing
Sexual continence or excess	Sexuality
Minimization of sex distinctions	Maximization of sex distinctions
Absence of rank	Distinction of rank
Humility	Just pride of position
Disregard for personal appearance	Care for personal appearance
No distinction of wealth	Distinction of wealth
Unselfishness	Selfishness
Total obedience	Obedience only to superior rank
Sacredness	Secularity
Sacred instruction	Technical knowledge

Silence	Speech
Suspension of kinship rights and obligations	Kinship rights and obligations
Continuous reference to mystical powers	Intermittent reference to mystical powers
Foolishness	Sagacity
Simplicity	Complexity
Acceptance of pain and suffering	Avoidance of pain and suffering
Heteronomy	Degrees of autonomy
	(Turner 1969:106-107)

It is important to note that this list was gathered from comparing liminal persons to status persons within a certain society. As Turner himself is quick to point out, this list could be considerably lengthened by considering other situations.

Liminality can be expressed in many different ways and by many different types of persons. One example that Turner uses is the liminally poor.

Liminal poverty must not be confused with real poverty, although the liminally poor may become actually poor. But liminal poverty, whether it is a process or a state, is both an expression and instrumentality of *communitas*. *Communitas* is what people really seek by voluntary poverty. (Turner 1974:265-266).

Liminal poverty is a throwing off of the trappings and belongings associated with the status-oriented world.

It need not be assumed that liminality is a state that one ascribes to and holds to forever, for liminality is oftentimes quite a short-term happening. One example of liminality (indeed the example that was instrumental in the formation of the concept) is the state into which one is put when

going through various rituals. Rituals can be seen as transitions from one steady state to another. During a period in rites of transition one enters into a marginal state which is not in society. When in this state of separation one could be classified as a liminal person. It is here that all values and expectations are reversed.

Liminality can be seen in a broader context as providing a source of new material for cultural evolution (roughly akin to mutations in biological evolution). Liminal forms of symbolic action are actions in which all previous standards and models are subjected to criticism and fresh new ways of describing and interpreting sociocultural expression are formulated (Turner 1974:15). As Turner states:

In this interim of "liminality," the possibility exists of standing aside not only from one's own social position but from all social positions and of formulating a potentially unlimited series of alternative social arrangements. That this danger is recognized in all tolerably orderly societies is made evident by the proliferation of taboos that hedge in and constrain those on whom the normative structure loses its grip during such potent transitions as extended initiation rites in "tribal" societies and legislation against those who in industrial societies utilize such "liminoid" genres as literature, the film, and the higher journalism to subvert the axioms and standards of the ancien regime--both in general and in particular case.

Without liminality, program might indeed determine performance. But, given liminality, prestigious programs can be undermined and multiple alternative programs may be generated. (Turner 1974:13-14).



Thus, we can see that liminal persons can be much more than social misfits or outcasts. Indeed, they can be seen as providing a whole new way of looking at life and ways to go about living life.

Liminality and its characteristics are quite useful concepts when considering the clients at the Poverello Center, but something is needed when looking at the meaning of the Center itself. What happens when a group of liminal persons congregate in one place? If liminal persons are characterized by being outside of structure, what replaces structure? Turner says that there are basically two types of human interrelatedness. One is a juxtaposed, structured, differentiated and hierarchial system of politico-legal-economic positions. Within this system there are many types of evaluation which separate men in terms of more or less. This type of society is the integrated, systemic whole that is quite often the model used by anthropologists in their studies. The other type of society which could be considered is an alternating, unstructured, undifferentiated, *communitas* or community. This is a society which is characterized by being composed of relationships built up of bonds between real, historic, idiosyncratic individuals. Persons are placed into categories, statuses, or stereotypes. Bonds are bonds unhampered by norms, custom, or legalities (Turner 1969:96). *Communitas* emerges when structure is absent, or perhaps because structure is absent. It is spontaneous,

immediate, and concrete. It is obvious that an essential character of *communitas* is that it is made evident through its juxtaposition to aspects of social structure (Turner 1969:34).

*Communitas*, when it exists, is quite complicated. Turner says that it is associated with coherence of a completed social drama. He says that, "Consensus, being spontaneous, rests on *communitas*, not on structure." (Turner 1974:50).

There are many important characteristics of *communitas*, some of which have already been mentioned. One is that it is beyond or without structure. Another is that it is composed of relationships between concrete, historical, idiosyncratic individuals. A third is that persons are not segmented into roles, and structures, but rather are confronting one another in the manner of Martin Buber's "I and Thou." Lastly, *communitas* is characterized by spontaneity and immediacy and usually cannot be maintained long (Turner 1974:131-132).

Turner has defined three categories of *communitas*. The first is an existential or spontaneous *communitas*. This is characterized by the "happening" that used to take place in the 1960s. A second type of *communitas* is normative *communitas*. This happens when the influence of time, a need to mobilize and organize resources, and a necessity for social control among members of the group in pursuance of goals,

force existential *communitas* to be organized into a perduring social system. A third type of *communitas* discussed by Turner is an ideological *communitas*. Turner applied this category to a variety of utopian models of societies based on existential *communitas* (Turner 1969:131-132). Turner again emphasizes the short-lived nature of *communitas* and says that both the normative and ideological *communitas* are already within the domain of structure, and it is the fate of all spontaneous *communitas* in history to undergo what most people see as a "decline and fall" into structure and law (Turner 1969:132).

It is important to realize that for the structural person one who is in *communitas* is an exile or a stranger, for he calls into question the whole normative order. That is why we must look at the interstices, niches, and on the peripheries of social structure to find even a grudging cultural recognition of *communitas* (Turner 1974:268). An important question at this point is whether or not the Poverello Center is such a place. If it is such a place, how does a member of normal structured society see the persons at the Poverello Center? Turner thinks that from the perspective of those concerned with the maintenance of "structure" all sustained manifestations of *communitas* must appear as dangerous and anarchial, and therefore, have to be surrounded by prescriptions, prohibitions, and conditions (Turner 1969:109). Thus, places in *communitas* may

indeed be characterized by negative, fearful attitudes expressed about them.

One interesting example that Turner thinks expresses a condition of *communitas* is the hippy subculture. He defined the members of this subculture as being cool members of adolescent and young adult categories. One defining characteristic that Turner thought was important was that these members had opted out of social order and status and instead had acquired the stigmata of the lowest classes. Turner says they dressed like bums. Other characteristics were that they were itinerant in their habits, folk in their musical tastes, and took on menial employment when they did work. Hippies tended to stress personal relationships rather than social obligations. Also, sex was a polymorphic instrument of immediate *communitas* rather than a basis for an enduring structural social tie. Turner sees that sacred attributes are borrowed from Zen Buddhism which say, "all is one, one is none, none is all." He holds these to be attributes of *communitas*. Also, the emphasis on spontaneity, immediacy, and existence is seen as characteristic of *communitas* (Turner 1969:112-113). This is especially interesting since many of the clients of the Poverello Center, especially the younger clients, seem to reflect some of the attributes of the old counter-culture.

Turner emphasizes that the type of *communitas* experienced by hippies is not a gentle refusal to join structured society:

The kind of communitas desired by tribesman in their rites and by hippies in their "happenings" is not the pleasurable and effortless comradeship that can arise between friends, coworkers, or professional colleagues. What they seek is a transformative experience that goes to the root of each person's being and finds in that root something profoundly communal and shared. (Turner 1969:138).

The research was conducted in the period from December 1975 to May 1976. Before commencing actual fieldwork, background information was obtained by searching the local newspapers for articles, letters, and editorials dealing with the Poverello Center, talking to persons who had been involved with the Center, and interviewing Ms. Kenney. I obtained permission from Ms. Kenney for the study, and the first observation trip was made to the Center in January 1976.

Initially, interviews, participant observation, and questionnaires were all to be used in the research. After a few observations, however, it became quite apparent that formal interviews and questionnaires would be difficult to administer. Many of the clients at the Center have very good reasons to distrust authorities and interviewers. Some are engaged in activities that run very close to being illegal. Others have to frequently deal with bureaucrats, such as those in welfare and child abuse, and resent having to have contact with one more bureaucrat, which I was often characterized as being. Therefore, it was decided that the

research techniques used would have to be rather informal and unobtrusive.

Similarly, the question of how one is to record data came up. The use of a tape recorder was ruled out immediately. The practice of taking notes at the Poverello Center was tried, but it also was ruled out. What finally happened was that as soon as a research session was over, and I was away from the premises, I would jot down, as completely as I could, notes on what had transpired. Later, but as soon as possible, I would make a fuller transcription of what had happened. At first I felt as if I had missed quite a bit, but my confidence grew as I gained more experience.

I attended the lunch hour approximately forty-five times for an average length of stay of about one and one-half hours. During these visits I would interact as widely and as much with the various clients and workers as I could. I would eat, converse, and observe the action. When I first began to attend the sessions I thought I was perceiving quite a bit of mistrust from the clients, which I later found to be a correct perception. Many of the people have reasons to distrust authorities, as stated earlier, and I was suspected as being a NARC, a priest or missionary, and a welfare spy. I attended my first session in January, and it was not until April that I began to see any real openness or trust develop.

An important point that I stressed, and I believe it was a wise move, was that I did not plan to and that it was quite unlikely that I could become one of them. I did not dress down for observation trips. I did not specifically try to change my vocabulary or way of acting. I tried to be very out front about who I was and what I was doing. At the same time, however, I tried to stress quite strongly that their life styles were not to be questioned on any level by me. I tried to project the fact that I was not there to study some deficiency in their lives. On the contrary, I was there to study a very interesting and authentic social situation. I tried to project the respect I felt for them as persons and for their lives. I found there to be no problem in this matter as I became more involved in the research.

Most of the observations were done at the Poverello Center itself. I did go to a few homes of clients, and I did see and talk with people at places outside the Center. Because of some rather uncomfortable situations, I decided to not make a practice of seeing informants in private homes.

Because I wanted to meet all the various types of people at the Center, I found that I often had to be a little pushy in meeting people. Accordingly, I found that quite often I had to step outside of the normal expected behaviors of a participant. That is, there were some persons at the Center

who spoke to no one and no one spoke to them. I found that I had to break through this barrier at times in order to find out pertinent facts. More than once, these excursions ended up in complete silence or else quite unexpected behavior on the part of the person I wanted to meet.

I consciously tried to limit my interactions to avoid changing what was happening. I think I was fairly successful in this. In fact, I suspect quite a few people would not even remember me.

As I have stated before, I began the research with the intention of holding formal interviews. This was abandoned quite early after a very high rate of refusals. What I endeavored to obtain thereafter were high quality informal interviews. At best, these consisted of long conversations at the table, in the lounge, sitting on the Courthouse lawn, or in a bar. At worse, these consisted of rather short and sometimes very strange snippets of conversations.

Unfortunately, I found the persons willing to give interviews to be heavily skewed in favor of certain types of clients. I tried to solve this problem by carefully observing these who would not consent to an interview.

During the interviews I tried to ask a number of predetermined questions, but this was not always successful. Sometimes this was the result of a poorly designed question, and at other times it was because of a lack of interest by the clients being interviewed.



Some of the interviews were held at places other than the Poverello Center. I tried to opt for neutral places where there would be no other influences other than the client and me, but this did not always work out. I was caught in the middle of one family fight and had clients split because of good parties.

The interviews I had with the various workers were quite easy to arrange and conduct. Most were held wherever I asked to meet, at whatever time I wanted to meet, and the questions talked about were whatever I wanted to ask. I found the workers quite willing to be interviewed.

I found that my success in reaching everyone I wanted to meet to be fairly good. Those clients with whom I did not get interviews were observed at length at the Poverello Center. I was also able to talk to others, both clients and some professional people, who knew them. I feel that I covered the situation quite well.

## CHAPTER. III

### ETHNOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION

One of the first things that I tried to do was to determine what types of people were using the Poverello Center. This was especially important to do when looking at the question of liminality. I continued this process of classifying people throughout the research and analysis portions of the research. The following may be just one of many possible ways in which one could analyze the clientele of the Poverello Center, but I feel it underscores some of the attributes that I want to emphasize.

We can begin almost anywhere, but one distinction that I arbitrarily made was to distinguish the transients from the fairly regular clients. Whether or not a person was a transient was quite often an arbitrary decision. There were some clients who were clearly transient. These might include persons hitchhiking across the country, classic hobos, and men looking for work in different locales. There were others who might be called marginally transient. These people might include persons who lived in some town near enough to Missoula to allow them to visit friends or to come to Missoula quite frequently. These people are tran-

sient to some extent, but they have enough contacts in Missoula and at the Poverello Center to be considered townies. Thus, we can see that many of the categories that we will look at overlap.

Before I begin to delineate the groups another note of caution must be voiced. I found that there were some definite groups, with group identity, feelings, and rules. I also found, however, that some of the categories that I delineated were just that. The people therein did not consider themselves to be members of a group. In fact, I found that there were quite a few people who were very much to be considered loners. As I describe the various categories of people this item will be considered.

#### Transient Unemployed

By using the term, transient unemployed, I mean to refer to those persons who are leaving a prior place of residence and are looking for a new place of residence and a new job. We should distinguish these people from those persons who travel from place to place picking up odd jobs, usually of a temporary nature. The former do not see themselves as constituting a group. They see themselves as caught in unfortunate circumstances and consider themselves to be in this position for a temporary time only. Many of the people in this category have left good jobs in other parts of the country for well-thought-out, good reasons. One

man and his family were traveling through Missoula looking for work. He was from West Virginia and had worked thirteen years in the coal mines. He decided to head west for a number of reasons. One was that he had been laid off quite a bit at his old job because of strikes, market slumps, and production cutbacks. He saw himself as escaping instability. Another reason he wanted to move west was that he felt that it would be a healthier place in which to raise his children. He saw the west as a place where people lived with better values, more freedom, and offering more opportunity for the little guy.

The transient unemployed gained contact with the Poverello Center through a variety of means. The person talked about above had gained contact with the Poverello Center through Welfare agencies, who he had contacted when his car had broken down while traveling through Missoula. Another family, whom I had talked with, had gained contact with the Poverello Center through church. When they left their old town they had been given the Poverello Center as a place to receive help from by their priest. These modes of contacts are to be distinguished from other modes of contact such as hearing about the Poverello Center through friends, by word of mouth from fellow travelers, and through the newspaper. By being referred to the Poverello Center by agencies and institutions it can be seen that these persons are seeking help in traditional ways that

could be associated with mainstream values. It could also be seen that these persons are not receiving information from fellow group members.

One thing that is important to emphasize about the persons in this category is that they saw their position as being a temporary position. It was a common statement of these persons that they would take any job just to get started. Indeed, one man from Seattle, who moved out with his family and formerly was employed steadily as a construction worker, took on a series of low-pay, low-status jobs, such as doing odd jobs around town for people, trimming trees for two dollars an hour, and doing errands for various people, until he received a good paying job. This period took approximately two and one-half weeks. It was felt by the man himself and others at the Poverello Center that he had found a good job in especially good time considering the job market in Missoula only because he showed such a willingness to work. The person from West Virginia continually stressed the fact that any job would be a good reason to settle down.

In general, the characteristics of this group are that they are looking for a permanent place to live, they want to get back into the mainstream of society as soon as possible, they left fairly stable environments in hopes of finding a better situation, and they are fairly straight. By this I mean that they definitely are not to be considered

to be part of the counter-culture, they do not use alcohol to an extreme, they do not advocate the use of various drugs, and they agree with mainstream American values.

### Short-term Travelers

This category is quite varied. Some of these people may seem very close to the transient unemployed, but one major difference is that these people do not see their particular position to be a negative and something-to-be-escaped-from experience. Included in this category are college students who are thumbing it for a vacation, bicyclers who are traveling on low budgets, young persons who decided to travel a bit before settling down, and any number of other persons who are taking vacations, breaks, or respites.

The Ryman Avenue location is quite handy for those persons who are passing through either on the highway or on the trains. Consequently, many of the people using the Poverello Center, especially as summer approached, were hitchhiking or riding the rails.

This category included persons from widely differing backgrounds. As stated before, some were college students and just saw this experience to be a minimal vacation in their otherwise mainstream lives. Some were remnants of the counter-culture, who were on the road for various reasons. Some were young persons just out of high school who wanted to experience a few things before they started to settle down. One interesting old gentleman was retired and widowed.

He decided that this was his chance to see the country before it was too late. He sold his home, bought a camper and a pickup, and decided to live off his savings and retirement income. He had children scattered across the nation and just traveled about, stopping in on them if they were on his way. As you can imagine, the range of different stories is quite large, but there are some defining characteristics to this group.

The obvious and the most important characteristic that all of these people share is that they are traveling. More than just traveling, however, they are traveling to no where in particular and they are traveling for a short length of time. This may be only a week or less, or it may be for a not so precisely determined chunk of retirement. These people are not necessarily traveling away from something, indeed all of the ones I talked to planned to return to where they started, but they are traveling to enjoy the very act of traveling. These people see this experience as an unusual event in their lives.

The question of whether these people see themselves as constituting a group is rather delicate. We may definitely say that these people see themselves as traveling persons and that they recognize the fact that there are other traveling persons about. They are distinguished from the transient unemployed in that they do not see their position in negative terms. They are not embarrassed by their state, indeed they

they relish the mystery that their experience lends them. Quite often there is a sharing of tales between the various folks who are traveling while they are at the Poverello Center. Stories are matched, information is shared, and especially opportune places are pointed out. However, at no time in any of my interviews or in conversations did I uncover any sense of group identity past this traveling experience. I think we may fairly safely say that while in this traveling state a sense of identity is shared. I also would like to emphasize that this identity is recognized as being of a short-term nature and not to continue when these people return to their homes. Thus we can almost compare these people with a group of initiates going through some sort of initiation ritual or rite of transition.

#### Long-term Travelers (Hobos)

At the Poverello Center older men would occasionally come through who seemed to be quite different from the other clients. One was immediately impressed by their efficiency in traveling. They always traveled light, quite often their entire baggage would consist of a rolled up package containing an extra pair of pants, towel, and toilet items. They moved into the Poverello Center lunch hour without any overt signs of embarrassment or confusion that so often typified other members of the Poverello lunch scene. They seemed quite confident and very self-assured when sitting at a table. They



did not usually say much. Quite often they would not respond in much detail in conversation with the other client, but they did not seem shy or afraid of others. One noticed, however, that when two or three of these men would meet that instant comraderie developed and sometimes conversations would be developed that would last well up until the time came that the Poverello Center would ask everyone to leave. These men are traveling men of the classic variety, or hobos.

There are many stories behind these men and it is not the purpose of this paper to explore to the depth needed to understand where these men are coming from and who they are to any great extent. Indeed, some of the most colorful and interesting clients came from the ranks of this category. One man used to be a Marine in World War II. He served during most of the island campaigns and consequently saw quite a bit of action. After the war he moved to Texas, acquired a family, and developed a successful business. He never quite reconciled himself to the senseless slaughter that he saw and had to participate in during the war. As a businessman he began to see that the same principles he had seen in the war and had abhorred so much were intimately linked with predominant everyday American values. As he put it, one day he woke up and decided that he had better clear out while he still had a conscience left. He hit the road and has been traveling since.

Another man used to be a rodeo performer. He also served

in World War II in the Pacific. After the war he returned to the United States and followed his interests into the rodeo. He was quite successful. In 1953, he cleared over fifty thousand dollars, by his own account. As he stated it, he partied the whole amount away as soon as he got it. Finally, he became a little too old to do rodeo much anymore, so he just stayed on the road following the rodeo when he could and doing odd jobs every now and then to get enough to eat.

These men are classic liminal persons in one respect. Most have been part of normal structured society, with families, jobs, and all that. All have rejected that way of life for their present existential rambling. Some talk about settling down. Most agree that the hobo way of life is about to come to an end. They cite the fact that it is not as safe on the road as it used to be. Before, according to one informant, one could walk into a camp where a group of men were preparing some coffee and stew and just expect to be given a share. Before, one did not worry about one's belongings or own safety. Now, he said, one could have one's throat slit for a new pair of boots. One did not fall asleep in a box-car unless one scoped out the situation very carefully. The talk of finding a place to settle down comes up quite often in conversations. One man has a teepee set up near Superior and plans to live in it and write a book. (After this conversation, however, I saw him back at the Poverello Center. He said he decided to travel for awhile more.) Another man has

his eye on a piece of land in the mountains and hopes to get a pension from an old war wound. Then he will build a house and retire. There was no talk of joining normal structured society, however.

It is quite easy to see that these men constitute a group. They talk of shared experiences, hot shot train rides that scooted one across the state of Wyoming at atrocious speeds while one held onto the underpinning of a boxcar; laying on top of a boxcar while it plowed its way through a long tunnel, breathing in diesel fumes and emerging at the other side in an almost unconscious state; and bars that habitually cheated one for drinks and where one could be killed at the drop of a hat but, at the same time, be a great old bar. They talked of a friend with a severe case of the DT's, who was walking down some little street in Wyoming and saw a duck walking towards him. This was not too unusual except for the fact that the duck was as large as a car and was walking right towards him with his head tucked under a wing. Well, this so upset him that he jumped sideways through a plate glass window in the Sears mail order house and woke up in the jail with cuts all over. The stories are endless. They constitute a life style that is shared and enjoyed by these men. There is a sense of wisdom about these men that is quite enjoyable and refreshing. Group identity is reinforced by these experiences, their rejection of normal structured life, and

by the amount of time they have spent together. They have a whole different vocabulary and wisdom centering around trains, bars, and making do.

### Long-term Traveling Malcontents

First of all let me apologize for the use of this term. I hesitate to use it even more than I hesitate to use the other terms I have coined for the clients of the Poverello Center. Unfortunately, I feel that this term, even though it is quite negative, will help explain who these persons are.

This category includes many different people. Some would fit in other categories fairly easily, such as those persons with emotional problems, but in the absence of evidence from those with expertise in defining such problems I elected to include them in this category. These persons are traveling on a long-term basis. In other words, they have no place to which they look to as constituting a home base, and they have no place to which they are traveling, but they differ from the hobos in that they do not consider the road to be their home. For an example, I interviewed one man who claims to have experienced every skid row west of the Mississippi. He moves from town to town, is a chronic and completely unrepentent alcoholic, hits up various rescue missions for the dole, and has built up no ties anywhere with anyone. I do not know the history of

this man, but I know he has been on the road for a good length of time.

Another example of this category would be a man who has traveled since 1957. He belongs to a couple of unions connected with construction and heavy steel working. He has worked at many jobs in various parts of the nation, but he has never seemed to be able to hold a job for very long. The reasons for his leaving seem always to be some undesirable person he has had to work with, some jerk who was his boss, or some impossible task he was asked to do. He says that he has not worked longer than four to six months at any job. He worked on Midway Island in the recent past. On this job he made very good money and saved up quite a bit, since there is no way to spend it on that most beautiful beached island in the Pacific. Well, he got tired of working with the jerks they put on his crew. The crew members did not know what they were doing, did not respect others, and were a bunch of young punks. He quit and left. He went to Las Vegas and spent a couple of thousand dollars in a week. At the end of the week he snatched a few clothes and headed off to find another job. He had many other stories to relate of jobs that he quit because of similar reasons. At the Poverello Center he did not seem to like many of the other people (he saw them as lazy and no good), did not talk to anyone except me, and did not stay more than two days.

There was no evidence of group feeling being built up between these men. They did not try to contact others in conversation, they did not tell of former experiences with others, and there was no special language. The only thing that characterized these persons is their lack of any sort of feeling of belonging or wanting to belong to anything. This is definitely a category, not a group.

Now let us consider the persons whom I saw as being stationary. By stationary people, what is meant is not anything more complicated or sophisticated than those persons who live in Missoula on more or less a permanent basis.

#### Marginally, or Part-time Employed

There is a category of persons at the Poverello Center who work at short-term jobs in Missoula. These jobs are usually fairly low-status jobs such as being a short-order cook at a local restaurant, doing one-time-only jobs such as lawn jobs, being hired to trim trees when the tree surgery company needed extra help for a short time, or being a part-time gyppo logger. These jobs are of short-term nature, have little or no degree of responsibility connected with them, demand no other skill other than being fairly physically fit, and are non-union. There are a variety of reasons why the jobs tend to be of such short nature. The first and most obvious reason for many of the jobs is that they are task-oriented jobs and are soon over with no follow-up activities needed. A second reason is that many of these

persons tend to have trouble holding jobs for any length of time. Reasons for termination range through such things as not getting along with the boss, drinking sprees, or getting tired of working.

The persons in this category live in Missoula, as stated before, and tend to move from dwelling to dwelling in such places as the cheaper hotels around town, rooms, and, occasionally, houses shared with other people. Their social lives tend to revolve very tightly around the various bars in town, private parties, and other activities that quite often have alcohol associated with them.

These persons are distinguished from others at the Poverello Center by having fairly traditional views about such things as attitudes towards the government, drugs, and church. Some have been in the military. One in particular, spent four years in the Navy and looks at this time with pride. In the Navy he never really achieved much distinction, but he sees himself as having been a good sailor and as being one of the boys. He spoke of his liberty activities overseas and recalled with pleasure the cheap hookers, cheap booze, and good times. Another man said that he thinks the best place for a young man to go after high school was into the military. He himself tried to join the Marines during the Korean War, but could not pass the physical.

Some of these persons have been married in the past,

but all were divorced during the time of this research. The persons in the category were all male. As far as I could determine there were not a lot of meaningful male/female relationships being built up. These men tended to know women in town through the various bars, and they tended to patronize hookers quite a bit. In fact, it was through them that I became acquainted with a few of the hookers at the Poverello Center.

There was a high emphasis on masochism values, such as fighting, swearing, drinking, and western life (rodeos, logging, hard work, etc.) among these persons. One man, who was in his early twenties, had just had his second pair of false teeth knocked out in a barroom fight. He had met a woman at a local bar and was sitting with her. Two other women got into an argument with his woman and proceeded to pummel her for awhile. He decided that they could not do that to his girl so he jumped into the middle of the fight to save her. Unfortunately, he had not figured on there being two big bruisers behind the two women, who soundly thrashed him. This incident was quite the topic of conversation for awhile.

There is a definite group feeling built up among these people. They drink at the same bars, work together, talk the same language, chase the same women, and have similar attitudes towards the others at the Poverello Center. There has not been time to weld the solidarity that we find



with the older hobos, but these men do see each other as pardners.

### Unemployed

Occasionally we see short-term unemployed people who are locals coming into the Poverello Center. There were both men and women in this category. The overwhelming characteristic of these people is that they definitely see their position as being of a short-term and disgraceful nature. The Poverello Center has usually been a last resort. Quite often, these people had no other choice they could see. This might actually have been because there were no other choices, but it also might have been because they did not know the ropes well enough. Most emphasized that they would repay the Poverello Center if they ever came into the position to do so. Indeed, a few of them did so in the time that I was there.

With the characteristics just mentioned it is rather obvious that there was no real feeling of a group being fostered. In fact, most of them felt quite ashamed of being in the position they were in.

### Older Women

There were a number of older women, in their late fifties, who ate at the Poverello Center fairly regularly. They usually came into the Poverello Center when their support checks, of various sorts, ran out. They had all

been married at one time, and were either divorced or widowed.

Some of the women had rather ill-paid, low-status jobs in Missoula. One was a night clerk at one of the cheaper hotels in town. She received a salary, plus a free room. Others try to exist solely off welfare, social security, or monies coming in from their former spouses. They all had children living in Montana, but they rarely saw them and did not get any support from them.

There was an interesting relationship between these women and some of the older men at the Poverello Center. Some of the women lived with men, but most of them lived alone. It was common, however, to find a symbiotic relationship between the older men and the older women. The women would quite often take care of the men as far as feeding them and washing their cloths. In turn, the men would quite often share money with them if they had any. Few of these relationships seemed to be anything other than friendship. There was no talk of love, but there were genuine signs of concern for one another.

These women all knew and would quite often sit with one another. Some of them drank quite often and would meet together at the bars for a night out. There was a recognition of being the same type of person and of being of importance to one another. There was not, however, any exclusiveness that we often find in groups. Most had many

ties to others outside the Poverello Center, and just saw the people at the Poverello Center as constituting a small portion of their friendships.

### Mentally Incompetent

There were four people whom I identified as being mentally incompetent. They all had different symptoms and different problems. One thing that they shared was that they did not participate with many of the other clients of the Poverello Center, or if they did participate with other clients, they tended to act incorrectly, and the participation would stop.

These folks were quite obviously liminal people. That these people did not form a group is fairly easy to see. Most of them have a very hard time relating to others, including other mentally incompetent persons.

### Physically Ill

I am going to use this category to include a very large range of people. I will include those persons who are actually sick or affected by a disease, those who have been deformed, and those who are too old to continue jobs. The general characteristic of these people is that they could not really hold a job or fulfill all the normal expected duties of a structured person in our society. Whether or not this is true or just thought to be true is not important to this paper.

There were some persons at the Poverello Center who have been affected quite severely by a prior illness. One man in particular has had problems with his digestion since the 1950s. Since that time he has only been able to eat very limited types of food, and he feels that this food has not been enough for him to work hard at the jobs he has been used to working.

There are also some old persons who come to eat at the Poverello Center. One man is almost totally deaf. He does not talk to anyone, but comes in and eats in silence.

These people all seem to be in a world of their own. They do not interact with anyone else at the Poverello Center. They are there because they have to be there, not because they see any alternatives. Most state that they would repay the Center if they had the means.

#### Conscious Rejectors of Norms

There are persons at the Poverello Center who see the society in the United States as being off balance and misdirected. They have decided to forgo the pleasure of joining the mainstream of society and have decided to remain aloof. All of these persons were fairly intellectual and could cite supporting data from various intellectual traditions.

They see themselves as involved in a brotherhood with the rest of the clients of the Poverello Center, but quite often they would express the conviction that the others at

the Poverello Center had not thought out their situation very well. They were looked at as being the paupers of society, but as being very unaware paupers.

All but one of these persons were in their early twenties. The older person was in his forties and had come from a substantial position within the academic community. All of the persons I talked with were from middle-class homes, and therefore it may be seen that this rejection of values has been done from a position of strength.

The emphasis here was on personal growth. The rejection of values, goods, and social expectations was to allow the person to grow as a person.

Most of these people have auxiliary sources of income. This income included friends, odd jobs, savings, and family. These persons are not as dependent on the different welfare systems as many of the other clients at the Poverello Center.

These people see definite similarities among themselves, but the emphasis is on individual action. If there is any group affiliation that they would claim, it probably would be based on the entire group of clients at the Poverello Center.

### Religious Proselytizers

There are a number of religious movements. Although it is true that the support for the Poverello Center comes

largely from Christian churches it must be stressed that there is very little official overt "preaching" done at the Center. There is a large amount of unofficial witnessing going on from various clients, however. These unofficial witnesses usually come from the ranks of what may be termed religious cults. Examples are the Unification Church, the Way organization, various charismatic groups, and one person who was associated with the Christian Science organization, but who was involved in metaphysical ramblings.

This category of persons is interesting to examine. Many of them saw their eating at the Poverello Center as their mission to which they had been called to or assigned to by God. None of the proselytizers that I interviewed, with the exception of the fellow into metaphysical ramblings, was forced to eat at the Poverello Center because of want. They had consciously decided to visit the Center because of the brokenness they saw there.

There was a certain degree of tolerance towards each other displayed, but there was a heavy undercurrent of criticism being leveled at one another. Most of these cults are very heavily oriented to evangelical type works, and they quite often see each other as ones who have not received the true revelations which would bring truth and total understanding. Even though there is this feeling that the other religious zealots are not really true

believers, quite often one finds that they all sit together. When they do sit together the conversation often turns to religious matters. In fact, most of the converts that seem to be made come from the ranks of persons who are already involved somewhat in these matters. Thus we may see definite similarities between these persons, but it is also important to stress that each person holds that he or she is different than the rest of the religious proselytizers who do not conform to his or her own particular brand of truth.

### Bikers

The tightest group of any at the Poverello Center are the persons who belong to motorcycle groups. Missoula has a few local resident bike groups and journeyers from other groups come through town upon occasion. The Poverello Center has become a well known place among many of these people. Many of the bikers do not have full-time, steady jobs. They work enough to maintain and build up their motorcycles, which quite often are beautiful works of art. Keeping enough freedom to be able to participate in rides to other towns, parties, and events of all sorts is quite important, and a steady job would preclude much of the socializing that actually does take place. The Poverello Center is one way of warding off the bills long enough to keep this life style going.

Most of the bikers come in with other members of their

gang. They usually ride their bikes, if they are running, and park them in conspicuous places outside the Poverello Center. Inside the Poverello Center the bikers sit together, as a rule, but they do not tend to hassle other patrons or try to exclude anyone else from sitting at their table. Their talk is flavored with topics and vocabulary which pertain to their own lives as bikers. One person I interviewed spoke of a weekend he just had in which he had ridden over to Idaho with some of "his people." The terms "my people" is quite symptomatic of group affiliation.

Violence, of course, is a way of life with many of these people.

Liminality is very evident with the bikers. These people are the rejectors of norms in almost every respect. They have rejected the idea of working at a steady job. They have rejected the sanctification of sex that typifies mainline values. They ride around on machines that are threatening and strange to most people. They embrace violence as something that is cool. They use drugs and drink liquor in amounts that are considered obscene by most people's standards.

### Young Hipsters

This category is meant to include quite a large number of persons at the Poverello Center. In fact, this category of persons is by far the largest group of persons at the



Center. Characteristics of this group are first of all, age. All of these persons are quite young, thirty or younger. This is important, I believe, because there is very much the spirit of irresponsibility and rejection of norms that is very easy to maintain when a person is younger. These persons really have not confronted the fact that they have a long life in front of them, in which they will have to maintain some sort of responsibility for what occurs in their lives. Another characteristic of these persons is a very frequent partying involving a mixture of drugs, liquor, and sex. They are also into the bar scene. The bars they go to in Missoula are bars that have music, dancing, and are populated by fairly young people. One behavioral trait that characterizes these people is having to pay dearly in violence at times. There is a large degree of masochism displayed on occasion. This, combined with a frequent attendance at bars, probably leads to violence.

One thing that I found interesting is the low status accorded women in this category. Women are talked down to, tolerated, passed around between different men, beaten on occasion, and thought of as being cheap by members of the category. On one occasion one woman was leaving and a man of this category stopped and started talking to her. They decided to leave together. On the way out he took hold of a strip of material that was hanging off of her blouse and

began talking to her like a dog as he walked her out the door. Afterwards another man, who had just been talking very friendly with her, told me that she would be all right if she was not so easy. He likened her to an old dishrag that could be used by anyone.

The background of these persons is mixed. Some have come from fairly standard middle-class backgrounds. Others have come from alcoholic parents. Some used to be in the counter-culture. Others were attracted to this life style because of the partying and easy-going style of life. There is considerable evidence to indicate that there is a tendency of these persons to find middle-class norms to be incompatible with their desired way of life. One man that I talked to had been in the Navy for a period of only seven months. He was released because of disciplinary problems. He is now going to school on the GI bill, but he had <sup>had</sup> trouble with the ladies who handle the account.

It is interesting that it is out of this group that the only known prostitutes have come. These women are all young, and they work out of bars in town without the benefit of a pimp or organization to support them. According to one man that I interviewed, these women tend to be fairly unprofessional as far as handling the business end of the deal. They tend to ask exorbitant prices, and then will accept just about anything if that fails. These women also will pick lovers out of this same category.

This category of persons constitutes a group in many real ways. There is a comraderie built up among these people that is real and viable. They share activities, houses and lovers. They share a life style that is not always pleasant. They tend to reinforce, console, and threaten one another sufficiently to give enough support so as to make it hard to turn away from each other.

### Alcoholics

This category could include just about everyone at the Poverello Center. I am including in this category only those persons who are really on the skids, tending to drink every night for long periods, having no steady jobs, and who tend to be classified as skid row bums. They are usually older, having gotten past the stage where it is considered "hip" to continue such a life style. They lead very broken lives, often being estranged and rejected by whatever family they have ever had. They are quite often put into jail just because they have nowhere else to go. They have the appearance of being totally unkempt, often missing socks, coats, etc., even in the middle of winter. Of all the people at the Poverello Center, these are the people who seem the most desperate.

There is a sort of comraderie built up between these persons, but the comraderie is very sad indeed. Often the conversation, when they are sober, turns about how sorry

they are because of what they have done the night before. They tend to support each other in these moments. A woman was consoling a man one day by saying it does not matter what he did the night before, with a weariness that spoke of countless infractions that have happened before. They tend to accept their brokenness with a weariness that is overwhelming.

Day to day life is quite difficult for these people. They have only the income that they can garner from various charitable organizations, panhandling, pawning goods they have found, or scrounging. Most do not have any capability to earn money. Housing alone is a monumental problem. Even if they had enough money, they have a terribly hard time finding a place to live. I spent one day helping a couple find a place to live. We finally found a place and they moved in with a great deal of excitement and joy, even though the place was a dirty little room. The next week I saw the couple at the Poverello Center looking very bad. I asked how things were and found out that they had been kicked out just a few days after they had moved into their place. They had gotten onto a drunk and created quite a stir at the building by being loud, fighting, and just stirring up a mess. The manager had told them to leave. Even the cheaper hotels refuse to take many of these people because of past experiences. They try to crash wherever they can. Food is handled somewhat by places like the Poverello Center, but when they get on a drunk they quite often forget about food.

Medical care is often ignored and hard to get. One man had an injury on his ankle that should have been looked at. It was swollen twice its size, was purple, pussy, and had open sores over it. It was suggested that he get attention for it, but he was on a drunk and just said that it does not matter.

Personality changes are rapid and total. The man with the ankle mentioned above is usually a very kind grandfather type. When he is drunk he becomes quite obscene, belligerent, and ready for a fight. He was one of the few people I saw thrown out for causing trouble.

Some of these folks have been very much involved in normal society, but for a variety of reasons they dropped out to participate in the life style in which they are presently involved.

### Native Americans

This is the one group of persons who escaped my interviews to any extent. I did have one interview, but the rest of my information is based on observation and interviews with others who have contact with the people I was interested in.

As with all the categories of people at the Poverello Center this category is not at all a unified group. There are older Native Americans who are very much alcoholic and exhibit the same life style to a large degree as that of the

rest of the alcoholics. There are younger men who work the same roustabout jobs that were talked about earlier. There are young hipsters who are involved with the other young hipsters. The reasoning behind including all of the Native Americans into one group is that they tend to see themselves as a group. They tend to see ties between themselves and the reservation. Lastly, others tend to see them as a group. The Native Americans constitute the one ethnic group represented in force at the Poverello Center.

There is a very obvious separation between the Native Americans and others at the Poverello Center. Many of the Native Americans eat together at the same table every day. They also tend to come in together and leave together.

## CHAPTER IV

### ROLE-TAKING AT THE CENTER

At the Poverello Center we notice that there is a great variety of different types of people. Built up between these people are relationships on many different levels. We want to know how these relationships are ordered. For this search we find that the concept of role-taking is useful. Role-taking is a dynamic process and is concerned with modification of behavior. There are three types of behavior change that we can be concerned with. The first is with respect to the perceptions that one has of the situation. A second type of behavior change is when behavior is modified in response to one's perception of one's self. The last type of behavior change is when one's perception of the other person with whom one is in relationship causes a modification of behavior.

For review, an idea that is quite significant to this study is that responses are based on meanings that one attaches to significant symbols used in communication. These responses or actions are much more significant than mere responses to stimuli. They are constructed by the individuals themselves. They are meaningful responses that are based upon the perceptions that one has of the situation

in total.

Role-taking is the mechanism that is intimately involved in all of this. Role-taking simply means fitting together lines of action to correspond to another's line of action. There are two bases for selecting the line of action to be taken. One is in response to an idealized role. The other is in response to others.

All of these things should be taken into account when looking at behavior and interactions at the Poverello Center.

Let us look at some examples of role-taking at the Center. Perhaps it is easiest to recognize role-taking when one sees a drastic change in the behavior of a person as he or she changes into a new role in relation to another person. For example, one day I was interviewing an informant in the company of his friends. He was a motorcycle gang member, as were his friends, and the conversation turned around bikes, rides, parties, and the people in the gang or who rode motorcycles. The subject of work never came up, in fact, the aspects of straight society, such as work and sobriety, were verbally discounted. Later, during the same lunch hour, the informant and I were sitting out in the lounge with a group of other people. One man, who was a gypso logger began talking about the logging he planned to do the coming summer. The biker began to ask questions and express interest in the logging operation. His vocabulary



began to more closely approximate the logger's; he began to tell stories of the various work experiences he had had, and in general, he moved to a role more compatible to the role he seemed to think the logger expected.

Another interesting sequence of behaviors came from a time in which I heard one of the rare criticisms of the Poverello Center by a client. Two older alcoholics were sitting at the table with me during lunch. Usually these men did not converse much with others at the Center, and when they did talk they would talk about pretty innocent and empty things. I brought up the fact that on the coming Sunday there would be an open house at the Center for the entire community. Their reactions were interesting. They began to complain about the food and concluded that the Poverello Center was saving all of the good stuff for the big wigs who would come to the open house. Between the two of them all signs of respectability and meekness could be dropped, and they could raise the true standards of their disaffection.

An interesting situation arose at the Poverello Center which shows how people modify behavior in response to the perceived situation. I had, over a period of time, talked with this man at lunch. He had seemed very friendly and quite willing to talk about his impressions of the Center and what was happening there. I noticed, however, that people were starting to withdraw from me during this time.

I did not know exactly what was happening, until, after a period of time, a woman friend of mine who is quite familiar with the Center spoke to me. She said that this fellow was a homosexual, and that the others assumed that we must have had a thing going. They had been keeping away for the situation seemed ambiguous. I was a little surprised and decided that even if the man was not a homosexual, I would make a point of staying away from him so as not to create any grounds for suspicion. This was fairly easy to do, and I was able to be more effective in my research. The point is that it is quite clear that others' behavior is affected by what the others perceived the situation to be.

I found the concept of role-taking to be quite useful in explaining how others reacted to me. I was seen as someone who was not like the other people. It was known that I was a graduate student in anthropology and was studying the Poverello Center in order to write a thesis. This was seen as rather ambitious. I dressed respectably, and I always had a schedule to worry about, which was certainly not the norm. Lastly, I had an easy rapport on an equal level with the other professionals who came into the Center. With these perceptions of who I was, combined with their own perceptions as to who they were, there were some very interesting encounters.

One of the first interviews I attempted ended in

failure because I did not use enough care in preparing the person I was trying to interview. I sat with this man who was a frequent, indeed almost a constant, resident of various skid rows across the western United States. He knew that I was there on official business of one type or another, but he really did not know what it was. I spoke of rather light topics for awhile, and then I asked him if he had time to talk for awhile. He refused by saying he has heard everything he has wanted to hear on the subject of Jesus Christ. I assured him that I was not going to speak of Jesus at that particular moment, and that I merely wanted to get his impressions of the Center. His perceptions obviously changed, and he began to tell me how nice it was and how he would certainly repay the Center if he could. The important point to make here is that through the process of role-taking he gathered an impression of who I was and molded his behavior appropriately.

It was rather common for persons to tell me how they intended to repay the Center. In fact, it was a problem with which I never really had a whole lot of success. Persons knew that I was studying the Poverello Center and quite often they tried to present themselves as persons who were just a little bit better than the average client.

I must look quite pious because more than one person thought I was a minister. I had talked to one elderly

lady quite a few times during different lunch hours. She was polite and told me about how she was trying to straighten out her life. Finally, one day she asked me what exactly I was doing and who I was. I told her what I was doing. She let out a big sigh of relief, and she told me that she thought I was a seminary student who was coming to the Center to do witness to the clients. She then told me of her son who had gotten religion and was always trying to convert her. After this encounter, we had no trouble communicating.

An interesting example of my failure to fit the role that I was assumed to be in happened with a panhandler. This panhandler came to the Center quite regularly. When he came he always seemed to find me. I consistently refused to give him anything. After three or four refusals he became quite belligerent about his panhandling and hostile when I refused him. I had violated his expectations.

There are three interesting sets of relations that I would like to discuss in the context of role-taking. The first is the relation I found between a group of older men and a group of older women at the Poverello Center. These people are all regulars and live in Missoula. The men are not working and are all fairly regular bar people. The women are also frequenters of the bar, but they tend to be more stable and find it easier to find places to live and food to eat. I found there to be a kind of symbiotic relationship between these men and women.

Upon one occasion a man had gotten into trouble the night before with the police, people in a bar, and others. He had been beaten up, gotten very drunk, acted quite rowdy, lost his new boots, and been thrown in jail. He came into the Center and began to lament his fate to a lady whom he saw quite often. He was talking in a very subservient manner and mentioned the fact that she had more education than he did and was much smarter. The woman comforted him by saying that it was all right and did not really matter anyhow. She also said that it was just something that happened to people like themselves and that, "We are poor now, we have always been poor, and we will always be poor." This woman assumed her role as a protector and comforter very adequately to this man.

Another interesting set of relationships that I observed was the relationship between men and women in the Young Hipster group. Basically, the Young Hipster group is quite chauvinistic, with males being the dominant in most circumstances. Sex is quite frequently engaged in and is expected to be available and free. The women are treated as and seen as nice things to have around but as having no real merit as people. There are many instances of behavior that show a very drastic difference in how the men of the Young Hipster group perceive their roles in relation to their women versus other women.

One example has already been mentioned. This is the

case of the man who treated a woman like a dog, and another man likened her to an old dishrag. Another case involved a table scene of which I was an observer. I was sitting with one young man and a young lady. He began to talk about school and the pretty girls there. He turned to the girl sitting with us and mentioned how pretty she was. He then pretended he was gagging and began to make fun of her. He followed this by laughing at his "joke." There is quite a bit of behavior like this that tends to demean the stature of women in this group.

This behavior changes quite drastically when a woman from another area comes into the Center. A friend of mine came down with me to the Poverello Center to see what was happening. She was quite obviously not a regular at the Center. While we were there it was instructive to notice the difference between the behavior directed towards her versus the behavior directed towards the women of the group. She was spoken to with interest and respect, while the other women's comments were discounted by all except my friend.

Thus, the role of the women in the group is very clearly defined by role-taking.

A third set of relationships I would like to discuss are the relationships found between the Native Americans and others and the relationships found between older Native Americans and the younger Native Americans. This is quite a complicated matter, and I will only discuss it briefly. One is

immediately cognizant of the lack of communication between the Native Americans and others at the Poverello Center. There are isolated exceptions, of course. One young man came into the Center over a period of two weeks for a total of three to four times. He was from Hardin, Montana, and was a Crow Indian. He sat down at the table with me and immediately began a conversation. I noticed later that he always sat with non-Native Americans and seemed to be distant from the Native Americans at the Center. This might be because of a difficulty in role-taking. He was Crow and most of the other Native Americans at the Center were from Western Montana tribes. Also, a point which I feel is quite important is that he was orphaned quite young and raised in an all-white school, town, and family. His ability to role-take seemed to be limited.

Another interesting set of relationships among the Native Americans is the relationships between the younger and the older persons. I found there to be quite a bit of antagonism at the Poverello Center between the two. One day one of the older ladies started to yell at one of the younger men about being so uppity and thinking he was too good for her. She reminded him that she was his elder, and that she had done much for him. Then she started to berate this other young man for asking her for a cigarette. She asked who gave her cigarettes when she needed them. There was quite a gap here in perceptions. A sore point seemed to be the degree of

political involvement that is expected. The older persons were a little nervous about being too political for they see themselves as being dependent upon the good will of the whites. They are afraid that the young will antagonize the whites and cut off their benefits.

A valid question to ask is what happened when people do not perform adequately in role-taking? One example of a group of people who do not perform well at role-taking are the religious proselytizers. Often these people eat alone, do not engage others in conversations successfully, and tended not to be included in others' conversations. One young man was full of enthusiasm for the Poverello Center. He thought it made the church relevant, and he enjoyed coming to the Center because he felt that he was needed there. I noticed after a period of observation, however, that he was avoided by the others, seemed to be alone most of the time, and quit coming after a bit. When he sat at a table he often seemed confused when dealing with others. He kept trying to get the conversation around to how nice the Poverello Center was and how nice it was to sit and commune with all these different types of people. The other clients reacted quite sarcastically to his comments, and it was rather obvious that he made them uncomfortable. This man did not know how to role-take adequately.

A person from the Unification Church was a notorious proselytizer. In fact, he stated that his whole worth was



measured at how well he shared his message. He made a point of sitting with people so as to engage them in conversation, and then he usually got the conversation around to spiritual matters. I noticed that anyone who had had to sit with him before would usually try to avoid him. I was the only person with whom he related to on a regular basis.

One woman from the Way ministry also ate at the Center. I noticed that she often sat alone, rarely conversed with anyone and, in fact, she seemed to avoid the others at the Poverello Center. I asked her during an interview why this was so. She said that she thought the whole Poverello Center was a waste of energy. She saw no value in trying to help people unless one did so in the context of spreading the word. She also said that unless one wanted to be friends with her on the basis of the word, she did not want to deal with them, and that the people at the Center did not seem to appreciate her message so she did not feel called to share it.

There was another group of persons at the Poverello Center who could not role-take. These persons were the mentally or physically incompetent. One man was so introverted and self-contained that he could not engage anyone in conversation. From other sources I found that he had been under psychiatric care for some time and had had trouble before. Another man was very hard of hearing and quite senile. He did not engage in conversation merely because he could not hear one unless one yelled.

Some of the most interesting incidents were when roles were violated grossly. One such incident occurred when a man came in quite drunk and rowdy. He swore profusely and loudly, cursed the clients, argued with the hippies, harassed any minority that walked by, and then began to hassle the workers. Ms. Kenney came out and told him to leave, but he then began to tell her how nice she and the Center was and how much he wanted to stay there and talk with people. Ms. Kenney told him that he would have to leave and asked one of the men to escort him out. On the way out he got his last licks in by telling everyone what a bunch of dopes they were and how they should go out and get jobs.

Another incident occurred when one of the workers came in drunk and began to cause trouble. He started to harass the clients and told them if they wanted to eat they better shape up, treat him with respect, and bring him some liquor and dope. He began to verbally abuse a black man and told him to wipe his mouth because the Center was a nice place and he did not want to see any slobs eating there. He then told a girl who had been beaten up a couple of weeks before that if she ever got into trouble again that she should tell him. He would get all the people at the Poverello Center together and they would kill the person who hurt her. After that, they would throw his body into the river.

Both these examples are examples of gross violations of expected behavior. In each case, they created confusion

among others. In each case the others did not react, but rather they chose to ignore the actions of the violator. Perhaps when confronted with such problems this is a common response.

An important mechanism at the Poverello Center and with many of the clients is a process of leveling. One lady that I interviewed said that the reason that she married her husband, who was a young hipster, was that she did not have to meet any requirements. She said that for straight men she would have to be good looking, come from a nice family, etc. She saw herself as accepted by the people she was around. She also said that she would like to get out of that situation, but she knew that she could handle the situation she was in and knew what to expect.

Another woman said that in this crowd there was no chance of being rejected. No matter what one did there was never any condemnation. One might be physically or emotionally abused, but one would not be exiled or forced out of the group.

## CHAPTER V

### A DRAMATURGICAL ANALYSIS

We will now consider Goffman's dramaturgical model when looking at the Poverello Center, but first, it would be wise to recall a few salient points from the earlier discussion. Goffman lists two principles which underlie all human interaction. The first is that one who possesses certain social characteristics has a moral right to expect others to value and treat him appropriately. That is, we all have the right to be believed. The second principle, which ties in very closely with the first principle, is that if one says or implies that one has certain social characteristics then one ought to have this claim honored and ought in fact to be what he claims he is. Thus, there are two principles, one of which says that a person has the right to be believed, and the other one says that a person has the obligation to be consistent with his presentation.

It is important to remember the concepts of team, audience, performance, front stage, and back stage. These concepts all could be applied in various manners at the Poverello Center, but the situation that will be looked at in this paper will be the situation where the workers make

up the performance team and the clients are the audience.

As was pointed out earlier, the true nature of the performance may very well not be the actual things that are portrayed in the performance. The performers may be concealing the true nature of the performance, overtly or covertly, from the audience. In fact, Goffman states very clearly that this is quite often the case. There is also an interesting possibility that the performer may be concealing the true nature of the performance from himself.

Goffman stresses the need for a rigid separation of the front region, which is in view of the audience, and the back region, which should only be open to the view of the performers. This separation also includes separation of the performers from the audience. He states that it is quite clear that no member of the performance team can also be a member of the audience, or vice versa.

We shall look at the performers as the workers at Poverello Center, Inc. The workers at the Center include many different types of people, but they are predominantly Christian. This is not unexpected for the Center is itself a Christian-centered organization. In fact, it will be remembered that when it was initially formed the originators were all third order Franciscans, and its original home was in the Knights of Columbus Hall.

Looking at the stated philosophy of the Poverello Center, is enlightening:

It is the philosophy of the Poverello Center that its services be rendered in as personal a way as possible; that respect for the individual person and his dignity be of primary concern; that every person is considered to be worthy and valuable as a human regardless of his race, religious beliefs, social status, physical appearance or handicap and in spite of any misconduct or anti-social behavior; consequently, every person should be met with concern, a presumption of trustworthiness, and a respectful attitude by the staff.

The policies and actions of the administration and volunteers should be governed by an attitude which we believe is Christ-like, even though not every member of this organization who has this attitude would necessarily so label it.

The purpose of the Poverello Center is to serve the poor through the practice of the corporal works of mercy--"...Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless..."

To provide a meal to all people that come to the center. All people who come seeking help will be helped if possible.

To provide spiritual guidance when needed and desired.

To involve all people in the community regardless of their faith, in an effort to demonstrate through Christian action that people do care, and do recognize that the unfortunate are many times powerless to help themselves.

To co-operate with all other social agencies, in dealing with people's problems, it is important to establish positive contact with other programs established in the community.

To extend to our fellow man love and concern in his hour of need, so that each may know that we are truly brothers regardless of race, color or creed.

(Philosophy of the Poverello Center 1976:1)

Among the Christian workers the talk often dwells upon the miracle they see being expressed by the Poverello Center. They marvel at the way everything has gone, for the support as been abundant. They appreciate the chance to serve in what they see as vitally needed ways.

The non-Christian workers are interesting in their own right. There are four persons whom I will describe, and then I will try to point out some general trends among all of the workers. One woman worked there almost every day during the time period I was observing at the Center. She was an older woman who had been divorced for a number of years. She was becoming involved in the women's movement and had many things to say about her perceptions of herself as a woman. She felt as if she sacrificed herself to put her husband, who was a psychologist, through school, and she resented not having a career of her own. One of her avowed reasons for working at the Center was to establish a reputation for being dependable and able to hold a responsible job. Another reason she worked at the Center was that she found it exciting. Finally, she saw the clients as being outcasts from society, and she saw herself in this category with them. She thought the Center was a good place to help people get back on their feet.

Another man who worked at the Center originally came to the Center for meals. He described himself as coming from a life of high success and then utmost despair. As he continued to use the services he found that he began to appreciate

the human contact of the clients and the workers. He began to volunteer time and, as he moved back into normal society, he continued as a volunteer worker. He stated that the reason that he worked at the Center was for a combination of combating the loneliness that he felt and to repay the kindness that was shown to him.

A third person who worked at the Center was a neighbor of the old Pine Street Center. He was one of the few neighbors to speak in favor of the Center during the zoning conflict. He seemed to be a fairly sensitive and kind person. He drove trucks for a number of years and made good money. He decided that he missed his family too much because of the life style that driving trucks forced on one so he quit and moved to Missoula to go to the University of Montana. When he saw the Poverello Center moving into his neighborhood, he was pleased to see people helping people in this manner. He began to volunteer help and was quite vocal in support of the Center.

The fourth performer, or volunteer worker, I would like to mention is quite the exception to the general pattern of worker. This man began to come to the Center during the time I was there and very quickly became quite involved in the whole operation. He first volunteered to help wash dishes, cook, or do any odd job that was needed to be done. As time progressed, however, he assumed more responsibility and began to try to exert more authority around the Center. This caused



quite a bit of dissension among the other workers during this time. Before he had arrived, the workers were a fairly acephalous group, with only Ms. Kenney being differentiated from the rest of the workers. He began to be noticeable out in the dining area and to brag about the Center, claiming credit for the new programs that were being developed. He moved among the clients with a patronizing manner and began to act as a counselor, giving out advice freely. Resentment built among the clients and workers. More of his behavior will be discussed later, but it is important to outline this behavior now, for it is quite clear that he is a different type of worker than the others. This man was quite obviously involved in a power building exercise through his involvement with the Center. This attempt was rather short-lived, however, for it was not long before he was asked to make himself less obvious and to cease from these behaviors.

It is now time to discuss the performance. The performers have been identified, and the audience, or the clients, has been discussed in some detail. The front stage region is not only a physical space, but it is also a time space. The clients are only in the dining area from noon to two o'clock in the afternoon. Before this time the performers, or workers, are out of sight and hearing of the clients. After two o'clock the workers are again alone. During the lunch hour itself there is a physical separation of the workers from the clients.

Thus, the front region may be thought of as the workers' forays into the dining area during the lunch hour. This is the contact period. The back region may be thought of as the kitchen, and the periods of time before and after the lunch hour itself.

In discussing the performers much of our work in looking at the performance has been done. The underlying assumption of the performers is that they are serving those who are less fortunate. There is an official line as stated in the bylaws. This is reinforced by the various paraphernalia that are scattered around the area. This includes prayers that are posted on the wall, crucifixes, and a poster that underlines the importance of loving others. Even those workers who do not profess to being Christians cite altruistic motives for working at the Center.

In keeping with this humble servant status there are a number of consistent behaviors which may be noticed. First, there is a strong emphasis on the absence of any sort of criteria by which to grant or deny any of the clients' food. That is, the clients are not questioned as to their legitimate right to receive food. In fact, the clients do not even have to request food. It is handed to the clients as soon as they come to the window. Secondly, there is a minimum amount of contact between the clients and the workers. The workers set out silverware and replace bread and butter, but other than these occasions, they do not come up to the

tables at all. The dining area is populated solely by the clients and is filled with their talk. When one of the workers does say anything to the clients it is usually something like, "It is a nice day today, isn't it?", "Have enough to eat?", or "How are you today?" No matter how big of a mess the tables are left in or how outrageous the client's behavior has been (except in a very few instances), I never heard any of the workers interact with the clients on a significant level outside of this quiet servant role. Even though the orientation of the Center is obviously Christian and there is a chapel in the building, I never saw any sort of religious proselytizing being done by the workers. In fact, this is discouraged. It is thought that the actions of the workers should suffice for a witness. Thus, I think it is quite clear that the performance is directed towards a portrayal of the workers as humble servants at work.

At this point we may question the true nature of the performance. As was seen when discussing the performers, there are many different reasons for working at the Poverello Center. These were an honest desire to help others, an expression of a belief in certain principles, a desire to combat loneliness, a desire to portray an image of one's self as an honest and trustworthy person, and, lastly, a desire to gain in status. Whether or not the performers are concealing the performance's true nature from themselves or from the audience is an interesting question, but I choose

not to discuss it in this paper. I think that it suffices to say that there are varying degrees of authenticity among the performers.

What I want to concentrate on is what happens when there is a breakdown in the performance. There are two types of situations that we will look at. The first is when the audience or the performers do not act appropriately and forces a miscue. The second is what happens when the audience is not observing or is not aware of the performance.

First, let us look at inappropriate actions by either the audience or the performers. There were two violations which have already been discussed, but which will be mentioned again in this context. The first situation is when an inappropriate behavior on the part of one of the clients caused the performers, or workers, to shift out of their performance. An elderly man came into the lunch hour quite drunk, bruised, and disheveled one day. This was not all that unusual, but what made the scene significant is that he felt quite surly and argumentative. In fact, instead of eating and confining his behaviors to the clients in fairly moderate tones he began to berate, challenge, and heavily scorn the other clients of the Poverello Center. He was quite loud and antagonistic towards some of the minorities, long hairs, and young people. He began to yell and curse profusely. When he began to curse, Ms. Kenney came out into the dining area and told him that he would have to leave

because he was bothering the other people. He responded by saying that he was enjoying his cup of coffee and that he was really not causing any harm. She then said that they did not appreciate his language or his actions and that he had better leave. He then began to tell her how great she was and how much he appreciated her kindness. After this, he put his arm around her. This action was too far out of line. She became very angry and loudly told him that he had better not touch her and that he had better leave. One of the male workers escorted the gentleman out.

This situation is important because it illustrates a violation of one of Goffman's principles. This is the principle that a person has the right to expect others to value and treat him according to his social position. Ms. Kenney expected certain behaviors to be directed towards her that she thought were appropriate to her position. When the old man put his arm around her and tried to flatter her, she responded quite out of performance and had him thrown out.

The second situation illustrates a violation of the second principle that Goffman holds is true for all social situations. This principle says that if one says or implies that one has certain social characteristics then one ought to have this claim honored and ought, in fact, to be what he claims he is. The situation is the one in which the male worker stepped outside his performance as a worker,

as discussed earlier. It is important to note that the reaction of the clients, or audience, was one of shock and puzzlement. His actions were confusing to the audience.

Thus, we can see that Goffman's model is very appropriate and useful in these situations. It helps explain the relationship between the performers and the audience and what happens when erratic behavior upsets the pattern. One may ask what happens when the performers give a performance that the audience for whom it is intended never sees?

The case may be made that the audience, or clients, at the Poverello Center really do not observe the performers, or workers. The workers at the Center are quite successful in not harassing the clients. It is part of the purpose of the Center to provide services to the poor without question.

The clients on the other hand are persons who are not at all unused to receiving services from others. Most have some experience with welfare, food stamps, and other relief type programs. When queried as to their thoughts on the Center most of the clients could simply state that this was the way things should be. They said that society should take care of its poor. Many commented that the Center was a bit unusual, but very few saw the Poverello Center as portraying a very strong Christian witness. Many of the clients stated that they thought the workers were probably middle-class citizens, most likely to work off a guilt feeling for having it so good.

## CHAPTER VI

### ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

As one observes the Poverello Center one immediately notices that these persons do not fit into what we would think of as normal society. There are many reasons that could cause this impression. First of all, it is not considered the norm by most Missoulians for a person to seek out and receive a free meal a day at a place such as the Poverello Center, a place that is often associated with rescue missions, welfare, and skid row by those who do not use this service. In other words, the public has developed a negative stereotype about places like the Center. Indeed, when interviewing neighbors of the Poverello Center and when viewing the controversy that surrounded the Pine Street location a comment that was quite often heard was that one should avoid being associated with the image the Poverello Center conveys, that is, with an image of poverty and destituteness. The people at the Center are noticeably unlike the normal Missoulian in appearance. The clothes are a bit older and shabbier, and many of the clients seem to look less well-groomed than the average citizen of Missoula. There are other factors that will be discussed which forces one to

sense a difference between the clients and others outside the Center.

As may be seen from the description of the persons at the Center all of the categories I have described may be seen as outside of structure. Indeed, this observation is shared among the persons I interviewed who had dealings with the Center. One of the workers told me that she saw the clients as outcasts from society, and that the clients were unpredictable people. She mentioned that one did not really know how they were going to act, and that they were often quite violent and surprising in their actions. While I was talking with her a lady came in and asked for a box of food. The food was gathered and handed to the woman. After the woman had left the worker mentioned that she saw the woman as being very mixed up.

When I interviewed a Protestant minister, he described the clients of the Center as less fortunate people who needed guidance and counseling. He did not see them as outcasts from society so much as outcasts from God's Kingdom.

One of the clients sees the other clients as cripples. She thinks that the reason people are at the Poverello Center is that they are crippled to one extent or another. This crippling could be based on the fact that one is a member of an ethnic minority group while living in a racist society, one is an alcoholic, one is a drug addict, one is mentally incompetent, one is physically ill, or one of any other of



a number of criteria. Indeed, quite a few of the clients at the Center agreed with her analysis.

Another clue to the nature of the Center is its name. The very word "Poverello" was chosen because it meant "little poor man" in Italian.

When analyzing the data I had collected from the Center, I found two criteria to be important in considering the liminality of the various categories. The first of these is the length of time a person will be or plans to be in a liminal state. The second was the attitude that a person displays towards structure.

I found that the most enlightening of the two is the attitude found expressed towards structure. The transient unemployed and the unemployed both saw structure as something that was desirable. The transient unemployed are persons who left one structure in search of another and more congenial structure. The unemployed, however, are locals who happened to not have a job. Though it is true that they moved totally outside of structure to do it. They are still part of structure to some extent. Both, however, desire to return fully to structure. A second attitude was that displayed by the short-term travelers, long-term malcontents, and marginally unemployed. It is that of desiring to be part of structure for the most part, but deciding to take a break from it for awhile. These are people who voluntarily separate themselves from structure in order to escape to more freedom, new experiences, fun, or from undesirable

situations. A third attitude was that structure is neither bad nor good in itself, but that it just is not what a person wanted to participate in at that time. The two groups who most closely fit into this attitude were the hobos and bikers. A fourth attitude shared by the conscious rejectors of norms, young hipsters, and religious proselytizers was that structure is bad and to be rejected. It is true that they rejected it on very different levels. The young hipsters rejected it because it was too square or not hip enough, the conscious rejectors of norms rejected it on intellectual or philosophical bases, and the religious proselytizers rejected it on the basis of not measuring up to a norm that they felt is required by a supernatural force. The fourth attitude at the Poverello Center is that society is good, but that there is no possibility for a person of a certain category to be part of it. The categories which fit into this were the older women, mentally incompetent, physically ill, alcoholics, and Native Americans.

The categories are differentiated according to whether they see their structureless condition as short- or long-term. Some see themselves as being in a particular position for a rather short length of time and expect to eventually move onto something else. The persons with this attitude are the transient unemployed, short-term travelers, unemployed, and young hipsters. The other attitude is to see oneself as stuck in one's position either by having no

alternatives, or else by never really seeing a time in which to return to structure. Those with this attitude are the hobos, malcontents, marginally unemployed, older women, mentally incompetent, physically ill, alcoholics, and Native Americans. Interestingly enough, the conscious rejectors of norms, religious proselytizers, and the bikers do not fit neatly into a time slot. Some will be liminal their entire lives and others approach it as a short-term experience.

I think it is fairly clear to see that all of the clients at the Poverello Center can be seen as liminal persons. All of them seem to be outside of structure to some extent.

What evidence is there at the Poverello Center for the existence of *communitas*? Is there any validity for the claim that the persons at the Center interact on real, idiosyncratic terms, outside of structure? Surely, as it was seen, many of the clients are not and do not expect to be part of normal structured society. There are characteristics of the clients that tend to deny them access to structure. These traits are things like a more casual acquaintance with violence than is normally expected, rather loose and unstable relationships (sexual, friendship, and others), a very mobile existence in terms of places of residence and geographical locations, lack of jobs and possessions, and a reliance and heavy use of alcohol or drugs or both.

It may be easily seen that most of the clients at the Center are liminal, but it cannot be said that *communitas*

is evident. There is not the sense of community needed for *communitas*. It is true that normal structured society is not found at the Center, but *communitas* has not taken its place. The clients are fragmented from one another and do not themselves form a body.

Turner has said that *communitas* is a rather transitory phenomenon. When interviewing long-term clients of the Poverello Center one often finds the opinion voiced that things were better in the "old days." It is often mentioned that there used to be more of a feeling of togetherness at the Center. In the past one found that after the meal was over the clients would stay at the Center for fairly long periods of time and converse, joke, and get to know one another. Long-time clients remember the earlier days with warmth.

One could ask if this is just the myth of a golden age that is found so often in most societies. It is quite possible for this to be the case, but when I first began to make observatory trips to the Pine Street Poverello Center there was, indeed, a closeness, sense of community, and intimacy that was not found at the Ryman Street Center. I found from my own observations that indeed there has been a change. The young hipsters have become more numerous and older clients have quit coming. The atmosphere has lost intimacy and warmth.

There could be many possibilities for this change.

First the move from Pine Street to Ryman Avenue probably had some effect. The Pine Street Center was located in a comfortable home on a tree-lined residential boulevard. The home had a fireplace and the dining area was the living and dining areas of the house. The floor was carpeted and the decor of the house spoke of a private residence. The Ryman Avenue Center is located in an older apartment building. There is neither carpeting nor a fireplace. The lounge is a little room one passes through on the way to the dining area. The decor is rather institutional and bland. The rest of the Center is closed off from the dining area. The move from Pine Street to Ryman Avenue has meant a move to a less personal and less intimate atmosphere.

Another factor to be considered is that I carried out my research during spring and early summer. This meant more people were on the road and many new faces were showing up at the Center for short lengths of stay. Most of the newcomers were young. It is very possible that all of the new faces tended to destroy the sense of community that could have existed among the regulars.

During this time period the director of the Center also seemed to undergo some changes. The director had some involved and unfortunate personal problems which tended to intensify as summer approached. These tended to draw her away from involvement with the Center. This withdrawal was picked up and commented on by the clients of the Center.

Whether or not *communitas* existed in the past is still an open question, but I think it fairly safe to say there is not a state of *communitas* now at the Poverello Center.

If the clients of the Poverello Center are not in normal social structure and are not in *communitas* we might very well ask where are they. I think it is proper to introduce the term *outsiderhood* at this time. By *outsiderhood*, I mean those persons who are outside of structure, either voluntarily or otherwise. These are persons who are not in normal statused society and also are not in *communitas*. They are disenfranchised from structure, but they see no sense of community in their lack of status. Goffman has recognized that these persons do exist:

One such deviation is important here, the kind presented by individuals who are seen as declining voluntarily and openly to accept the social place accorded them, and who act irregularly and somewhat rebelliously in connection with our basic institutions-- . . . Those who come together into a sub-community or milieu may be called social deviants, and their corporate life a deviant community.

If there is to be a field of inquiry called "deviance," it is social deviants as defined that would presumably constitute its core. Prostitutes, drug addicts, delinquents, criminals, jazz musicians, bohemians, gypsies, carnival workers, hobos, winos, show people, full time gamblers, beach dwellers, homosexuals, and the urban unrepentent poor-- these would be included.

. . . . .

Social deviants, as defined, flaunt their refusal to accept their place and are temporarily tolerated in this gestural rebellion, providing it is restricted within the ecological boundaries of their community.

Like ethnic and racial ghettos, these communities constitute a haven of self-defense and a place where the individual deviator can openly take the line that he is at least as good as anyone else. But in addition, social deviants often feel that they are not merely equal to but better than normals, and that the life they lead is better than that lived by the persons they would otherwise be. Social deviants also provide models of being for restless normals, obtaining not only sympathy but also recruits.

(Goffman 1963:143-145)

I would like to expand this to outsiderhood by including those persons who have not made a "voluntary and open" refusal of their normal social place. Liminal persons, such as the ones discussed in this paper, can be and quite often are outsiders.

### Conclusion

The Poverello Center is a unique social place, comprised of real individual persons relating out of real individual lives with other such persons. Surrounding and entangling these persons is a complex array of relationships, roles, expectations, normed behavior, erratic behavior, hopes, ideals, and so forth. We have looked at a very minor portion of this array. It is interesting, but what does it tell us about society in general? In the Conclusion we will try to synthesize the data with a model designed to help us see generalities.

The model to be used in this study is borrowed from that oft misunderstood and aligned, but quite useful, wellspring of

conceptualizations, mathematics. What is borrowed from mathematics is a set of concepts that tend to underlie all fields of mathematics in a very general manner. These concepts are the concepts of sets and maps. First, let us move on to a few definitions.

A set, in mathematical terms, is a collection of objects. There are various types of sets, but we shall only be concerned with this most basic definition. Examples of sets are the set of all books in the University of Montana library, the set of all peaks in Montana over 17,000 feet in elevation (this set is void or empty), and the set of all typographical errors in this paper (hopefully this will not be a very large set).

A map is a bit harder to define and understand. First of all, to define a map we need two sets. In mathematical terms let us say we have sets A and B. A consists of the elements (or objects),  $\{a, b, c, d, e\}$ . B consists of the elements (or objects),  $\{f, g, h, i, j\}$ . A map is a set of ordered pairs. If  $\Phi$  is a map from A into B, then the first element of the ordered pair is from A and the second element of the ordered pair is from B. Thus  $\Phi$  could consist of  $\{(a,i), (e,h), (c,i)\}$ . There is one other important requirement for a map and that is that if we find the same first element in two ordered pairs, then the second element in the two ordered pairs are also the same. That is, no first element can be associated with two second elements,



or each first element must be associated with a unique second element. Thus, in our example if  $(a,h)$  and  $(a,i)$  are in our map, then  $h$  has to equal  $i$ . This added property causes the map to be well defined.

The utilization of the concept of maps will be clearer when we see that we could view a map as an operation, or transformation, that sends elements out of one set into another set.

Let us pause a bit to stress that a set is a collection of objects. This is to be differentiated from a map, which is best seen (for our purposes) as something active. A map sends objects from one set into another. This distinction is crucial for an understanding of the model.

This then is our model--a number of sets and maps between these sets. This may be diagrammed as Figure 1.

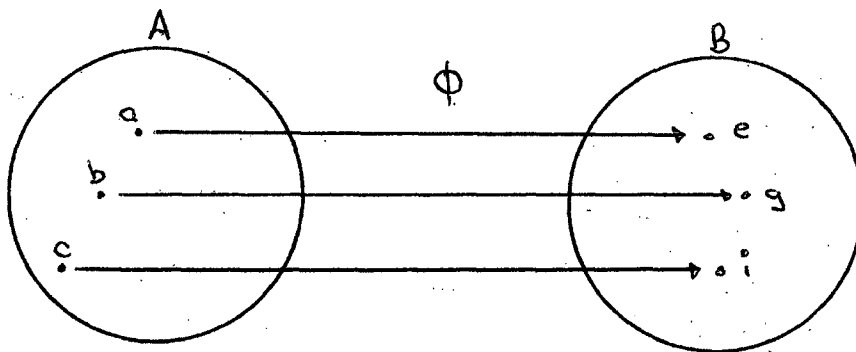


Figure 1.

Note that there may be more than one map between sets. Using the sets A and B defined earlier we can define many maps. For example, let:

$$\Theta = \{(a,i), (e,h), (c,i)\}$$

$$\gamma = \{(a,h), (b,i)\}$$

$$\zeta = \{(d,i), (b,i), (c,i), (d,i), (e,i)\}$$

We see that all of these maps satisfy our definition of a map.

Now how do we use this model in our study of the Poverello Center? First, we can define three sets. These sets are structural categories. The first set we may define is social structure itself. Here we are using Turner's definition. Again Turner defines social structure as a

. . . superorganic arrangement of parts or positions that continues, with modification, more or less gradual, through time. (Turner 1969:125).

Thus, we could see social structure as a coherent system of relationships.

The set would be comprised of those social positions in social structure. These are the social positions found in a status-oriented system, which are occupied by the "normal" persons in society.

A second set that we will define is *communitas*. This is also used as Turner defines it and is comprised of those social beings considered to be in a state of *communitas*.

A third and last set that we will look at is *outsiderhood*. *Outsiderhood* is distinct from social structure in that

the persons who are outsiders are not included in the set of relationships comprising social structure. By a variety of means they have been put or have stepped outside of structure. Outsiderhood is also different from *communitas*. There is no sense of group identity, cohesiveness, or awareness of lack of status in the same manner as *communitas*. Very often, outsiders see their position as shameful or degrading. It may be argued that outsiderhood is a phenomenon afforded only by larger, more complicated societies. Thus, we have sets. From the previous discussion in the earlier chapters, I think it may be seen that these sets are not empty or vacuous. Indeed, they correspond to real phenomena.

Thus, we could picture these sets as:

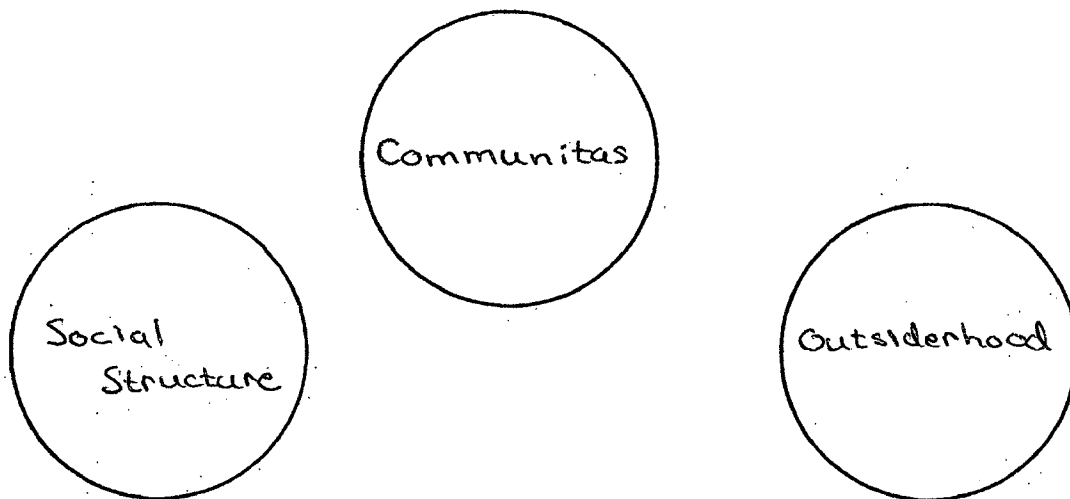


Figure 2.

What maps could we define between these three sets? We could ask the same question by asking what moves elements of these sets from one set to another?

At the Poverello Center we saw many folks who were denied access to structure for various reasons. Some of these were alcoholism, age, physical sickness, mental incompetency, etc. We could look at these persons as being considered unfit by members of normal structured society. Thus, we could see denial as a map that transforms persons of structure into outsiders. As we have noted, these persons are not in *communitas*.

Also, we saw persons at the Poverello Center who had consciously rejected normal structured society, but who also did not fit the criteria to be in *communitas*. These were the motorcyclists, the young hipsters, the conscious rejectors of norms, and the short-term travelers. These persons have been transformed from persons of structure to outsiders by this rejection. Thus, we could speak of rejection as a map from structure to outsiderhood.

There were persons at the Poverello Center who neither rejected structure nor were denied structure. They seemed somehow to be inadequate when it came to measuring up to structure. These are the malcontents. For some reason, they could not cope with structure. Thus, inadequacy may be seen as a map from structure to outsiderhood.

Perhaps the classic map from structure to *communitas* is the rite of passage. This is any rite such as initiation,

marriage, etc., that ritually separates a person from structure for a period and then replaces that person in structure again, most often in a new status. During this rite a transition takes place from one steady social position to another. The period of separation very often is an occasion for the existence of *communitas*. Thus, this rite is a two-way map. It transforms one from structure to *communitas* and back again to structure.

Are there other maps? For those who have consciously laid aside structure one could assume that they could pick it up again. Thus, we can see that returning is a map from outsiderhood to structure.

Similarly for those denied entrance to structure it is conceivable that conditions might change so as to cause those in structure to accept them. Thus, acceptance could be seen as a map from outsiderhood to structure.

Thus, we have a number of maps between the three sets. We can now ask what are the mediating factors, or what are the factors that determine when a map is used and when it is effective. First of all, I think we should look at the role of the workers. From the chapter on a dramaturgical analysis of the Poverello Center we saw that in a very real sense the workers were playing not to the clients but to each other. In other words, the active role of the workers in relation to the clients is fairly small. What is important is that by distributing food and services in an uninvolved manner

the client's outsiderhood is not threatened. Thus, we see that the workers would not be an element as far as the makeup of the sets is concerned. Indeed, they would tend to negate the effects of the maps.

The next mediating factor would be what I term the care network found in society. By this, I am referring to the churches, volunteer groups, welfare, and various training programs. All of these groups are oriented towards helping people meet various needs, and some are designed to change persons into what is considered more desirable types of persons. The expressed purpose and effect result of these groups could be seen as enhancing the maps' own structure.

An important phenomenon that was observed is the concept of leveling. By this it is meant the process whereby all persons in a category tend towards the mode that defines that category. This process includes personal friendships, esteem, sharing goods, and resentment of someone else bettering themselves. All of this tends to keep a person where that person is. This would tend to reduce the effects of the various maps.

Thus, we have a model and have tried to apply it to the case in hand. A model is essentially an heuristic device designed to tell us something about the phenomena we are looking at. Our model has shown us that there are degrees of relatedness between the three categories of social organization that we have been discussing. It has shown us that

these categories are not impregnable. By use of these maps and sets we can look at a social system and attempt to explain why persons are distributed the way they are.

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