

## MINDING EXPERIENCE: AN EXPLORATION OF THE CONCEPT OF “EXPERIENCE” IN THE EARLY FRENCH ANTHROPOLOGY OF DURKHEIM, LÉVY-BRUHL, AND LÉVI-STRAUSS

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In line with the growing concern with the unexamined reliance upon the concept of “experience” in anthropology, this article explores in some detail the various usages and definitions of the concept in the work of three of early French anthropology’s most influential theorists: Émile Durkheim (1858–1918), Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857–1939), and Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–). With its important influence on both British and American anthropology, the early French anthropological tradition, as epitomized in the writings of these three thinkers, has indeed played a pivotal role in shaping many current taken-for-granted understandings of the concept of experience in the discipline of anthropology as a whole. In the process of exploring how experience is viewed by these three scholars, this paper will thus take some initial steps toward the historical contextualization of many of the unquestioned assumptions underpinning current understandings of experience in the discipline of anthropology and the social sciences more generally. © 2003 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

We are currently witnessing a growing concern with the unquestioned reliance upon the concept of “experience” in anthropology and the social sciences more generally. As the historian Joan Scott notes, the extent to which “the appeal to experience” pervades the social sciences as a basis for the foundation of “incontestable evidence” is truly remarkable (J. Scott, 1991, p. 777). According to Robert Desjarlais (1994, 1997), the pervasive unquestioned reliance upon experience in anthropology is reflected in the fact that anthropologists seldom feel the need to define the term in the context of their writing and research. Ontologically, he argues that this is due to the fact that experience is held by most anthropologists to be a universal, “fundamental and unchanging constant in human life” (1997, p. 13). Epistemologically, he suggests, that experience has come to connote in anthropology (and philosophy) an “interiority,” “immediacy,” “primacy,” and “authenticity” that confers a truth more exacting than cultural, intellectualist, conceptual, and/or theoretical models can convey.

Indeed, while the concept of experience has remained a key—if largely understated—concept throughout much of the history of the discipline, its proliferation throughout recent anthropological writings is quite striking (See for instance White and Kirkpatrick, 1985; Jackson, 1989, 1996; Ewing, 1990; Howes, 1991; Kleinman and Kleinman, 1991, 1997; Wikan, 1991; Csordas, 1994a, b; Good, 1994; Hastrup and Hervik, 1994; Hastrup, 1995; Marcus and Fischer, 1999). While perhaps most famously explored in an influential volume edited by Victor Turner and Edward Bruner, entitled *The Anthropology of Experience* (1986), experience has become a central construct for a number of divergent perspectives in anthropology, including feminist theory, phenomenological anthropology, psychological anthropology, medical anthropology, and critical ethnography. In each case, experience is held to be not

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only a central area of investigation, but is often also viewed to be the descriptive ground upon which all later conceptualization, speculation, and explanation are erected. Whether anthropologists are working to describe “cultural experience,” are investigating issues of power and resistance in the context of “postcolonial experience,” or are exploring the ways in which cultural forms are differentially articulated in an individual’s “lived experience,” it is still the often undefined construct of experience that serves as the touchstone for their writing, theorizing, and research.

This essay contributes to this recent discussion about the unexamined reliance upon the concept of experience in anthropology (see also Throop, 2002, 2003a) by exploring in some detail the various usages and definitions of the concept that are found in the work of three of early French anthropology’s most influential theorists: Émile Durkheim (1858–1918), Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857–1939), and Claude Lévi-Strauss (b. 1908). With its important influence on British anthropology in the context of the work of A. R. Radcliffe-Brown (1881–1955), E. E. Evans-Pritchard (1902–1973), Edmund Leach (1910–1988), Rodney Needham (b. 1923), and Victor Turner (1920–1983), and with the importation of this influence to American shores through Radcliffe-Brown’s tenure at the University of Chicago and Turner’s tenures at Chicago and the University of Virginia, the early French anthropological tradition as epitomized in the writings of these three thinkers has played a pivotal role in shaping many current taken-for-granted understandings of the concept of experience in the discipline of anthropology. As a close reading of these three thinkers’ work will attest, while there are some important continuities in the ways that each theorist views the concept, the range of usages and definitions employed by Durkheim, Lévy-Bruhl, and Lévi-Strauss in many ways importantly defies what has been characterized by recent critiques as the overly subjectivist, intellectualist, and cognitivist (J. Scott, 1991; D. Scott, 1992; Desjarlais, 1994, 1997) take on experience that is putatively the hallmark of many current social scientific approaches. In the process of exploring how experience was viewed by these three scholars, this paper will thus take some initial steps toward the historical conceptualization of many of the unquestioned assumptions underpinning current understandings of experience in the discipline of anthropology and other related fields of inquiry in the social sciences (see also Throop 2003a).

#### THE EARLY FRENCH “ANTHROPOLOGICAL” TRADITION

Before going much further, an explanation is in order about why I have chosen to focus on the work of these three particular theorists, and why it is that I have classified them as being representatives of an early French “anthropological” tradition. I will begin with the latter. While I believe that few would have a problem labeling the influential French structuralist Claude Lévi-Strauss an anthropologist, some readers might take objection to the inclusion of Émile Durkheim and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl in this tradition. Indeed, it is true that both Durkheim and Lévy-Bruhl were trained as philosophers at the *École Normale Supérieure* and both maintained ongoing dialogues with philosophy throughout their respective careers. Both men also had decidedly broad ranging interests, published on a number of non-anthropological topics, and Durkheim was, of course, first and foremost a social theorist.

Moreover, during the period in which these two men were writing, anthropology in France would have connoted something quite different from what is meant by the term today. Instead of referring most generally to the ethnographic study of differing cultures/societies—what is currently called ethnology in France and Germany, social anthropology in Britain, and cultural anthropology in America—anthropology would have brought to mind the study of human origins and racial classifications, something more akin to physical or biological an-

thropology as it is practiced today (Stocking, 2001, p. 210). Indeed, in France, there was much animosity between ethnologists and anthropologists, so much so that George Stocking argues that “a more or less systematic opposition to ‘anthropology’ seems to provide one of the unbroken threads in the early history of the Société d’Éthnographie” (2001, p. 213). That said, I believe it is still appropriate to use the term “anthropology” to characterize the works described below in a more general sense, referring to a type of theorizing and practice that is predicated on the use of cultural data to assess, shed light upon, and/or challenge existing theories, ideas, and assumptions that may be part and parcel of a given field of study.

Turning to address why I have decided to focus on the writings of these three particular thinkers, I should first make it clear that my intention is *not* to argue for a straightforward historical connection between these scholars’ various theories of experience. Indeed, such an approach would most certainly require that I devote some time to discussing the work of Durkheim’s nephew Marcel Mauss (1872–1950), among others. In contrast, my rationale for selecting these three particular authors was based not only on the fact that each theorist can be considered to have importantly influenced present-day theorizing and research in anthropology and the social sciences, but more specifically that each of these three thinkers had explicitly and systematically engaged in an ongoing and explicit dialogue with the concept of experience in the context of his work, something that cannot be said for a great many of their predecessors, peers, and successors.

#### DURKHEIM ON THE ELEMENTARY FORMS AND THE REPRESENTATION OF EXPERIENCE

Born and raised in the small town of Épinal in Lorraine not far from Strasbourg, Émile Durkheim attended the prestigious École Normale Supérieure in Paris where he received his training in philosophy. After graduation, he taught philosophy at several provincial *lycées* before traveling to Germany for a year in 1885, where he was exposed to the ideas of Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920). In 1887, Durkheim was granted the first professorship of sociology in France at Bordeaux, and in 1902 he was awarded a professorship in sociology and education at the Sorbonne in Paris. It was at the Sorbonne that Durkheim began training a number of bright young scholars, including François Simiand (1873–1935), Maurice Halbwachs (1877–1945), Robert Hertz (1881–1915), and his nephew Marcel Mauss (1872–1950). It was also here that he founded the journal *L’année sociologique*.

While remembered by most as one of the founding fathers of the discipline of sociology, Durkheim was also an important founding figure in the discipline of anthropology. Indeed, many of his most renowned students, including Mauss and Hertz, were first and foremost anthropologists (ethnologists), working to extend many of Durkheim’s original insights in the field of sociology to the study of non-Western cultures. Moreover, while Durkheim’s early writings focused primarily upon the sociological study of European cultures, his last and most mature work, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1895/1912), was decidedly anthropological in terms of its theoretical scope and its heavy reliance upon ethnographic data. In fact, as the eminent Harvard sociologist Talcott Parsons (1902–1979) argued, Durkheim’s later writings were so significantly impacted by culturalist and anthropological assumptions that he advised social theorists to ignore this mature work in favor of his earlier sociological formulations (Parsons, 1937; see Fields, 1995). Accordingly, while, with a few notable exceptions (Alexander, 1988; Shilling, 1997; Allen, Pickering, and Miller 1998; Shilling and Mellor, 1998), sociologists have largely relied primarily upon Durkheim’s early writings when formulating their social theories, anthropologists have been long impacted by his relatively late *Elementary Forms*. Perhaps most significant for this essay is not only the great influence

of Durkheim's mature writings for anthropology, but further that it is in the context of this later work that we also find Durkheim's most explicit and revealing discussions of the concept of experience.

In this book, Durkheim extended his earlier work with Mauss, *Primitive Classification* (1963/1903), by setting out to demonstrate that not only collective representations of classification systems, but also the actual categories of human thought are formed through social processes. In contrast to Immanuel Kant's (1724–1804) *a priorist* philosophy, where the fundamental categories of thought (e.g., space, time, number, etc.) were understood to be the “pre-given” foundation for human experience, and the British Empiricists' (i.e., John Locke [1632–1704] David Hume [1711–1776]) view of the categories as distilled from the gradual accretion of sense impressions, Durkheim set out in *Elementary Forms* to formulate a social epistemology wherein the categories of understanding were held to be generated in the context of such social determinants as the experience of collective ritual (see Godlove, 1996; Rawls, 1996; Throop and Laughlin, 2002).<sup>1</sup>

In the context of Durkheim's discussion of this long-standing philosophical debate between “empiricist” and “*a priorist*” perspectives, we find some important insight into his own understanding of experience. According to Durkheim, Kant's *a priorism* was predicated on the assumption that the categories of understanding prefigure our ability to experience, and accordingly cannot be understood as derivative of the same elements that constitute our “sense experience.” Kant's *a priorism* must therefore “ascribe to the intellect a certain power to *transcend experience and add to what is immediately given*” [emphasis mine] (Durkheim, 1995/1912, p. 14).

In contrast to this *a priorist* stance, Durkheim characterized the empiricist thesis as holding to the idea that any and all categories of thought must be constructed from the sedimentation of multiple instances of subjectively mediated sense experience. Here then, Durkheim noted that from this perspective, the experience of a sensation or an image was tied to definite objects that served to express “the momentary state of a particular consciousness” (1995/1912, p. 13). In this light, Durkheim argued that classical empiricism, by reducing the categories to constructs derived from sensation, was founded in a necessary “irrationalism.” In his estimation, under “these conditions, to reduce reason to *experience* is to make reason disappear—because it is to reduce the universality and necessity that characterizes reason to mere *appearances, illusions* that might be practically convenient but that correspond to nothing in things” (1995/1912, p. 13, emphasis added). In this case, we thus see that Durkheim formulated an understanding of “ordinary” or “direct experience” as intimately tied to sensation, while he alluded to a representationally mediated form of experience that is tied to the faculty of reason.

Much later in the book in the context of a critique of “animist” and “naturist” theories of religion, Durkheim again seems to have equated “ordinary” and “direct” experience with sense data. Here, he argued that both “animist” and “naturist” positions attempted to “construct the notion of the divine out of the *sensations* that certain natural phenomena, either physical or biological, arouse in us,” and thus to “explain how these supposed data of religious thought could take on a sacredness that has no objective basis they had to adopt the notion that a whole world of hallucinatory representations superimposed themselves upon those *data*

1. It is important to note that while Durkheim set out to outline the basis for a model of the social genesis of the categories of understanding, he did not believe that social or cultural processes determined differential parameters for the functioning of such mental processes as “rationality.” In fact, Durkheim spent a great deal of time trying to argue for essential continuity between “primitive” and “civilized” forms of reasoning and was, not surprisingly, highly critical of Lévy-Bruhl's writings on “primitive mentality.” In other words, his was primarily a causal argument for advocating the primacy of the social in the constitution of the psychical, and not a model for detailing the differential patterning of psychical faculties according to developmental or evolutionary dictates.

of experience, distorting them to the point of making them unrecognizable" (1995/1912, p. 84, emphasis added).

Durkheim continued with this theme of the superimposition of "hallucinatory" representations upon the "data of experience" when, in his chapter entitled, "Origins of these Beliefs (Conclusion)," he defined "delirium" as any mental state wherein the psyche "adds to whatever is immediately given through the senses, projecting its own impressions onto it" (1995/1912, p. 228). After defining "delirium" as the non-veridical imposition of mental impressions upon what is "*immediately given*" to the senses, he then went on to argue that while to some extent it is certainly true that our olfactory, gustatory, visual, tactile, and auditory sensations "do correspond to certain objective states of the thing represented" (1995/1912, p. 229), the regular superimposition of collective representations upon experiences derived from the senses leads to significant alterations in the perception of what is "given" to the mind. Collective representations thus "turn upon sensation a beam that lights, penetrates, and transforms it" (1995/1912, p. 437). For these reasons, he asserted that "there is perhaps no collective representation that is not in a sense delusive" (1995/1912, p. 228)<sup>2</sup>.

Near the end of *Elementary Forms* Durkheim shifted to a discussion of "sense/percept" and "concept" that I believe also helps to shed further light upon his understanding of experience. In this case, Durkheim made an important distinction between "perception" and "conceptualization" that mirrors the many references to "direct" (perceptual/sensorial) and "mediated" (representational) experience alluded to throughout the rest of the text. While Durkheim explicitly used the idea of "direct experience" in a few places in the *Elementary Forms* (1995/1912, pp. 53, 148), he never really did, however, clearly articulate its complement. Indeed, with his many references to the "hallucinatory," "illusory," and "delusional" attributes of our representational capacities, he often seemed to have used the concept of experience almost exclusively to refer to its "direct" or "immediate" variant as sensation. However, I believe that we can read Durkheim as establishing what we will find to be a long-standing distinction in the French anthropological tradition between sensory and conceptual experience; where one is thought to be a direct apprehension of the "given," and the other is understood to be a constructive alteration of the "given" by a mind that is importantly shaped by personal, social, and cultural resources. In fact, Durkheim often explicitly spoke of "direct experience" when discussing the sensation or the perception of the "immediately given," while at least implicitly pointing to "mediate" experience in his discussion of collective representations and their ability to transform the "immediately given" by superimposing upon it an ideational realm that serves to frame what is "given" in experience according to social and cultural dictates. Citing William James (1842–1910),<sup>3</sup> Durkheim's position with regard to "direct experience" becomes clearer with his view that sense impressions:

are in perpetual flux; they come and go like the ripples of a stream, not staying the same even as long as they last. Each is linked with the exact moment in which it occurs. We

2. Here, Durkheim pointed out that a distinction could be made between our collective (intellectual, ideational, representational) and individual (sensorial, experiential, emotional) lives. In this respect Durkheim argued that humans can be conceived as "double," that is, humans are "really made of two beings that are oriented in two divergent and virtually opposite directions, one of which [the representational] exercises supremacy over the other" (1995/1912, p. 266).

3. While Durkheim was relying heavily upon James in these passages, the reader should note that Durkheim had a rather ambivalent stance toward James's philosophy. Indeed, early in his career Durkheim was highly critical of James's emphasis on "individual psychology" (Durkheim 1974/ 1898) and was equally critical of James's pragmatism in a series of lectures given toward the end of his life (Durkheim, 1983/1913–1914; see Rawls, 1997). That said, Durkheim's thinking in *Elementary Forms* did have a number of significant points of convergence with James's (1996/1912) radical empiricism (see Throop and Laughlin, 2002, pp. 46–47).



are never assured of retrieving a perception in the same way we felt it the first time; for even if the thing perceived is unchanged, we ourselves are no longer the same (1995/1912, p. 434; cf., James 1950/1890).

Durkheim went on to say that the *concept*, by contrast:

is somehow outside time and change; it is shielded from all such disturbance; one might say that it is in a different region of the mind, a region that is calmer and more serene. The concept does not move on its own by an internal, spontaneous development; quite the contrary, it resists change. It is a way of thinking that at any given moment in time is fixed and crystallized (1995/1912, pp. 434–435; cf., James 1950/1890).

Ultimately for Durkheim then, “[l]ogical thought is possible only when man has managed to go beyond the fleeting representations he owes to sense experience and in the end to conceive a whole world of stable ideals, the common ground of intelligences” (1995/1912, p. 437).

In this light, we can summarize Durkheim’s understanding of experience as based upon two distinct varieties: (1) a conceptual variant that is mediated by collective representations that serve to impose structure on the fluctuating stream of the senses, and (2) a perceptual variant that represents the direct apprehension of the external world through our various sensory modalities. While it is true that Durkheim tended to emphasize the significance of the faculty of reason and the stability of collective representations in giving order and form to what would otherwise be fleeting sensory impressions, it is important to recall that one of the central theoretical thrusts of *Elementary Forms* was to suggest that the categories of understanding are themselves formed through socially generated *affective* and *sensorial* determinants (see Rawls, 1996, Throop and Laughlin, 2002). When understood in light of this affective and sensory reformulation of Kant’s *a priorist* take on the categories in the context of effervescent psychosomatic states generated in the context of collective ritual, Durkheim should thus be read as having presented us throughout *Elementary Forms* with what amounts to be a significantly non-cognitivist view of experience.

#### LÉVY-BRUHL’S CONCEPT OF EXPERIENCE AS REFRACTED THROUGH THE LENS OF MULTIPLE MENTALITIES

Lucien Lévy-Bruhl was born in Paris in 1857. After receiving his doctorate in letters from the École Normale Supérieure he focused much of his intellectual efforts on studies in the history of philosophy (Lévy-Bruhl, 1890, 1894, 1900), and moral philosophy (Lévy-Bruhl, 1903), before finally turning to what would become his highly controversial studies of “primitive mentality” (1926/1910, 1923/1922, 1965/1928, 1935/1931, 1935, 1938). Among his many academic accomplishments, Lévy-Bruhl was nominated to the chair of the history of modern philosophy at the Sorbonne in 1904, and along with Mauss was one of the founding members of the French Ethnological Society.

Building on Durkheim’s early writings on collective representations, Lévy-Bruhl’s understanding of experience can be best understood within the context of his attempt to further Durkheim’s initial insight that “[d]ifferent mentalities will correspond to different social types” (1926/1910, p. 27; see also Morton, 1986; Mousalimas, 1990; Schmaus, 1996)—an insight that was rooted in what was a more general anti-evolutionary stance of many of the early French anthropologists. Indeed, it was this basic insight that Lévy-Bruhl attempted to extend in detailing what he understood to be the fundamental differences between “primitive” and “modern” mentalities. Where the latter were held to be organized according to “logical” modes of thought that are primarily grounded upon cognitive functioning, the former were

thought to be fundamentally “prelogical,” infused with imaginal and emotional currents that often served to “distort” the stability and coherence of the world as first given to the senses. Careful not to follow Edward Tylor’s (1832–1917) and Herbert Spencer’s (1820–1903) views of “primitive mentality” as an antecedent evolutionary stage to “modern mentality,” Lévy-Bruhl argued from a nonevolutionary perspective that both forms of “mentality,” while differentially organized, were to be understood as equally valued (1926/1910, p. 78).

In *How Natives Think* (1926/1910), Lévy-Bruhl explained that while for the “modern mind” mental representations are cognitive phenomena that are precise and differentiated, for “primitive mentality” mental representations are far more complex, undifferentiated, and infused with emotion, feeling, and passion (1926/1910, p. 36).<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, Lévy-Bruhl asserted that in addition to being suffused with such “emotional” and “motor currents,” “primitive mentality” is almost exclusively directed by culturally constituted collective representations and as such is “bound up with preperceptions, preconceptions, preconnections, and we might almost say with prejudgments,” which serve to alter the functioning of such mental capacities as reason, logic, and inference (1926/1910, p. 108)<sup>5</sup>

Driven by an alternative logic, Lévy-Bruhl held that “primitive mentality” operates such that an individual confronts a world constituted by collective representations that are largely “impervious to experience.” As he put it, “[p]rimitives see with eyes like ours, but they do not perceive with the same minds. We might almost say that their perceptions are made up of a nucleus surrounded by a layer of varying density of representations which are social in their origin” (1926/1910, p. 44).

For Lévy-Bruhl, it was precisely this collectively generated representational saturation that accounted for the differential functioning of “primitive logic” that operates without regard to the “law of contradiction.” Because the “primitives” collective representations serve to direct his/her perception beyond immediate sensory data to the occult forces and the “imperceptible elements” thought to operate beyond the purview of our various sensory modalities, the “primitive mind” was understood by Lévy-Bruhl to be driven to see connections between otherwise “logically” disparate phenomena (e.g., between a man and his totem animal). In Lévy-Bruhl’s estimation, therefore, categorical thinking and instances of mutual exclusivity, which are the putative hallmarks of logical thought, are abandoned in “primitive mentality,” which instead operates upon a “law of participation” whereby the mind is not merely presented with an object, but “communes with it and participates in it, not only in the ideological, but also in the physical and mystic sense of the word” (1926/1910, p. 362). As Mousalimas (1990) makes clear, for Lévy-Bruhl this participatory experience therefore involved two simultaneous perceptions, “the sensory perception of physical things and the affective perception of the invisible power . . . [such that the] two perceptions [are] ‘intertwined and interlaced’” (1990, p. 43).

In his book *Primitive Mentality* (1923/1922), we find that Lévy-Bruhl once again discussed this bipartite model of “primitive experience” when he argued that:

Our [modern] experience is the sum-total of a comparatively small number of data and an infinitude of inferences. That of the primitive mind on the other hand contains but a small proportion of inferences; but it contains many direct data to which we deny ob-

4. In my opinion, this description of “primitive mentality” is actually an accurate description of all “mentalities” where cognitive, affective, and conative elements are ever-present and at times interfused (see Throop 2002, 2003).

5. Again, we are confronted with a description of “primitive mentality” that serves as model for all “mentalities,” which are directed to a great extent by “preperceptions,” “preconceptions,” “preconnections,” and “prejudgments.”

jective value, although in the primitive's eyes they are as real as, even more real than, those afforded by the senses (1923/1922, p. 61).

"Non-primitive mentality" was therefore thought to adhere to logical processes whose elements are drawn directly from experience and are in turn confirmed or disconfirmed according to it. As Lévy-Bruhl put it, "I know that logical processes, if they be correct, and their elements drawn from experience as they should be, will lead me to definite results which experience will confirm, however far I pursue them" (1926/1910, p. 126). In contrast, he asserted that "primitive mentality" is characterized by the tendency to see behind all sense impressions the movement of occult forces. In other words, where Lévy-Bruhl believed that the "modern mind" is attuned to a relatively accurate perception of the external world (1926/1910, p. 59), "primitive mentality" is thoroughly permeated by socially derived collective representations which serve to drastically alter the images the mind perceives. It is then the infusion of perceptual proclivities with collective representations that serve to alter what the "prelogical mind" perceives at any given moment. As he explained, at "the very moment when he perceives what is presented to his senses, the primitive represents to himself the mystic force which is manifesting itself thus" (1923/1922, p. 60). The perception was thus understood to be little more than a symptom or sign that indexed to the perceiver the action and/or intention of an otherwise hidden force.

Lévy-Bruhl argued that the more the mind was freed from its envelopment in the body's "affective and motor elements" the closer collective representations are able to "approach that which we properly call 'idea'—that is the intellectual, cognitive factor occupies more and more space in it" (1926/1910, p. 375). It was through this increased "cognitive orientation" that Lévy-Bruhl argued that the mind is able to become gradually more open and accessible to experience, and thus attuned to increasingly veridical sense perceptions of an external reality. In turn, this ensures that the individual perceiver was able to become "alive to the law of contradiction" (1926/1910, p. 376).

In this regard, it seems that Lévy-Bruhl's most general definition of experience in this early work was predicated upon at least three important components: (1) "direct data" that consists of subjective states organized according to perceptual, sensory, and motor contents; (2) "indirect collective representations" infused with imaginal and emotional contents that are in and of themselves often "impervious to experience" as mediated through our sensory and motor capacities; and (3) cognitively mediated "inferences" that were held to be intellectual, intersubjective, and objective conceptualizations that serve to parse the distorting effects of collective representations and their emotional and imaginal constituents in developing a closer, more accurate representation of the world as experienced.

In the context of this comparison between "primitive" and "non-primitive" mentalities we further find that Lévy-Bruhl struggled to explicitly define "ordinary experience," which he understood to index a sense-based apprehension of an external, physical, and objective reality. As he stated, "experience is limited to what is stable, tangible, visible, and approachable in physical reality" (1926/1910, p. 64). And again later in the same work, "ordinary experience" consists of those "lessons which may be learnt by observation of the objective relations between phenomena" (1926/1910, p. 363). Indeed, Lévy-Bruhl asserted that "primitives" are not dissuaded by the imperfect mapping of their beliefs in "mystical" or "occult" forces onto experience since:

when collective representations imply the presence of certain qualities in objects, nothing will persuade the primitives that they do not exist . . . .Consequently, that which we call experience, and which decides, as far as we are concerned, what may be admitted or



not admitted as real, has no effect upon collective representations. Primitives have no need of this experience to vouch for the mystic properties of beings and objects: and for the same reason they are quite indifferent to the disappointments it may afford (1926/1910, p. 63).<sup>6</sup>

While, earlier in his career, Lévy-Bruhl suggested that the saturation of collective representations in "primitive" mental functioning is responsible for the fact that "the primitives' experience must appear more complex and richer than our own" (1923/1922, p. 60), his assertion that "primitive mentalities" are "impervious to experience" was indeed a central theme that ran throughout his entire corpus of work (1926/1910, pp. 63–65, 75–76, 96, 108, 374–375; 1923/1922, pp. 60–61; 1938, p. 227). In his estimation, for the "primitive mind" collective representations are therefore held to have such a hold over perceptual faculties that even "the most direct evidence of the senses cannot counter act it" (1926/1910, p. 375). As he put it, the:

primitive's mental process is a different and rather more complex one. That which we call experience and the natural order of phenomena does not find in primitives, minds prepared to receive and be impressed by it. On the contrary, their minds are already preoccupied with a large number of collective representations by virtue of which objects . . . always present themselves charged with mystical properties . . . These preformed connections are not derived from the experience of the present, and experience is powerless against them" (1926/1910, p. 76).

And moreover, "Characteristics which can be discerned by experience, in the sense in which we understand it, characteristics which we call objective, are of secondary importance in its eyes, or are important only as signs and vehicles of mystical qualities" (1926/1910, p. 128).

Lévy-Bruhl can thus, in this context, be understood as utilizing the concept of experience in at least two distinct ways, namely, (1) in terms of "ordinary experience" that functions in "non-primitive mentalities" as a more or less simple and correct sensory rendering of external reality and (2) in terms of the "complex" and "rich experience" of "primitive mentalities" that is characterized by an interpenetration of sense, representation, emotion, and imagination that paid little heed to motor or sense impressions of an external reality.

Where the representational capacities of "non-primitive" or "logical mentalities" were held to be predicated upon the presentation of an object to a subject, in "primitive" or "prelogical mentalities" there was thought to be a fusion of subject and object in such a way that it was possible for Lévy-Bruhl to argue that the "primitive"'s "mind does more than present his object to him: it possesses it and is possessed by it. It communes with it and participates in it" (1926/1910, p. 362).<sup>7</sup> And yet, in this early work, Lévy-Bruhl seemed himself at times to adhere to a "participatory logic," for he was often impervious to the logical contradictions evidenced in

6. For example, in his book *The "Soul" of the Primitive* (1965/1927, p. 20), Lévy-Bruhl explained that like "ourselves, the primitive perceives the general differences between a stone and a tree, or a tree and a fish or a bird, but he does not heed them, because he does not feel them as we do. The form of objects interests him only so far as it permits him to divine how much mana or *imunu* they may possess." Indeed, to "primitive mentality the bare fact, the actual object, hardly exists" (1926/1910, p. 109).

7. According to Lévy-Bruhl, "rather than speak of collective representations, it would be wiser to call them collective mental states of extreme emotional intensity, in which representation is as yet undifferentiated from the movements and actions which make the communion towards which it tends a reality to the group. Their participation in it is so effectually lived that it is not yet properly imagined" (1926/1910, p. 362).

his ascription of sense-distant representations to “primitive minds.” For while “primitive mentalities” were supposedly impervious to the evidence of sense-based experience:

the collective representations of primitives are not, like our concepts, the result of intellectual processes properly so called. They contain, as integral parts, affective and motor elements, and above all they imply, in the place of our conceptual inclusions or exclusions, participations which are more or less clearly defined, but, as a general rule, very vividly sensed (1926/1910, p. 79).

In this same section, Lévy-Bruhl also spoke of “individual” and “collective representations” and asserted that it was often difficult to differentiate between the two. Here again we witness an internal tension in Lévy-Bruhl’s reasoning, for while he ascribed experience to the intellectual interpretation of sense perception, which rendered objective representations of reality, he also asked “[w]hat can be more individual, to all appearances, than sense-perceptions?” (1926/1910, p. 106). And yet he argued that “the primitive’s sense-perceptions are enveloped in mystic elements which cannot be separated from them and which undoubtedly are collective in their nature. The same can be said of most of the emotions—experienced . . . [such that] in these communities as much as in our own, perhaps even more so, the whole mental life of the individual is profoundly *socialized*” (1926/1910, p. 106).

In his book, *L'Experience Mystique et les Symboles Chez les Primitifs* (1938), Lévy-Bruhl turned to a more explicit and philosophical discussion of experience that can be seen to importantly anticipate many of the current concerns with the unquestioned usage of the concept in anthropology by well over 50 years. In this book, he pointed out that the Western understanding of experience was erected upon a number of “mental habits” accrued from centuries of philosophical debate. In this respect, he argued that central to Western notions of experience was an emphasis on the importance of the functioning of the intellect at the expense of recognizing the presence and significance of affective elements (1938, p. 9). As he put it:

The essential role of experience that this tradition has described and analyzed, since the time of Plato and his predecessors up until Kant and his successors, is to inform the sensing and thinking subject about the properties of beings and objects with whom he is placed in relation, in order to make him perceive movements, shocks, sounds, colors, forms, odors, etc., and to permit the human spirit, which reflects on these “givens” and on their conditions, to construct a representation of the world.<sup>8</sup> The general notion of experience that has resulted is, therefore, above all “cognitive” (Lévy-Bruhl, 1938, p. 9, translated by author. See Desjarlais, 1997, p. 14 and Needham, 1972, p. 173 for somewhat differing translations).

In the context of his posthumously published *Notebooks on Primitive Mentality* (1975/1949), Lévy-Bruhl continued with this more explicit discussion of the properties of experience with his extended ruminations on two basic varieties of experience; the “ordinary” and the “mystical.” In this work, Lévy-Bruhl at times attempted to distance himself from some of his earlier positions with regard to the putative differences between “primitive” and “modern” mentalities and tried to establish a clearer rendering of both the similarities and differences

8. It is indeed interesting that in an earlier work, Lévy-Bruhl had also speculated that it is possible to uncover traces of “primitive mentality” in those “anti-intellectual” philosophies that have recurred periodically throughout the history of philosophy. According to Lévy-Bruhl, these “anti-intellectualist” philosophies “promise that which neither a purely positive science nor any theory of philosophy can hope to attain: a direct and intimate contact with the essence of being, by intuition, interpenetration, the mutual communion of subject and object, full participation and immanence” (1926/1910, p. 385).

between these two modes of being-in-the-world. Here, while the “primitive mind” was certainly conversant with “ordinary experience,” which the “modern mind” understood to be essentially “homogenous and on a single plane”:

[t]heir mind is [also] oriented mystically and where for us it is a matter of a homogenous and ordinary experience only, it is for them a matter of experience, at one and the same time, ordinary and mystical, in which they do not think to separate what conforms to the natural order from what depends on supernatural forces (1975/1949, p. 42).

In this respect, Lévy-Bruhl argued that while with “what concerns ordinary experience, they interpret and utilize [that experience] rather as we do,” when some event, perception, or feeling does not seem to coincide with the regularities imputed to the world of external reality given to the senses, there is an extension of the “general conditions of experience” to include the “mystical” (1975/1949, pp. 52–53, 55, 139, 176). Typically, Lévy-Bruhl was not consistent in this characterization of experience, however, for he also held that where “modern mentality” has through centuries of reasoning established a clearly demarcated definition of experience as distinct from “belief” and “has disqualified and excluded mystical experiences from valid experience” (1975/1949, p. 123):

primitive mentality has not at all the same idea of experience. It is wider than ours. It will include, besides the ordinary experience which is like ours, the mystical experience which puts “primitive man” in contact with another reality, revealed by experience itself, and he does not dream of doubting it any more than the experience furnished by the impressions coming from the surrounding milieu. (1975/1949, p. 147).

It was then in outlining a “bi-univocal” model of experience that melds both ordinary and mystical varieties of experience in “primitive mentality” (1975/1949, p. 147) that Lévy-Bruhl seemed to ultimately return to his position of difference between the two types of mentality. In this light, he asserted that it is necessary for anthropologists to resist imputing the “traditional frameworks of our psychology and our theory of cognition” upon the data they collect when studying “primitive” cultures. Indeed, when we leave aside the facts of experience that are similar in the primitive mentality and in our mentality: perceptions of the senses, knowledge of the surrounding world and the regular sequences of phenomena, etc. . . . There remain the mystical experiences . . . and the content of myths, taken as true. In order to explain these, no longer will we appeal to the familiar concepts of experience or belief . . . (1975/1949, p. 151).

#### FROM EXPERIENCE TO REALITY IN LÉVI-STRAUSS

While generally considered one of the most renowned theorists in the discipline of anthropology today, Claude Lévi-Strauss, much like Durkheim and Lévy-Bruhl before him, received no formal training in anthropology. Born in Brussels in 1908, Lévi-Strauss studied law and philosophy at the University of Paris, after which he was given an opportunity to teach sociology at the University of São Paulo, Brazil. Despite his lack of training in anthropology, Lévi-Strauss’s tenure in Brazil (1934–1939), which included a few brief ethnographic “expeditions” among the Bororo, Cadureo, and Nambikwara peoples, fueled what would become his lifelong dialogue with anthropological theory and research in the context of his well-known writings on structuralism. While he returned to France briefly in 1939, with the outbreak of World War II he left for New York where he stayed until 1947. During this time, he held teaching positions at the New School for Social Research, New York’s

École Libre des Hautes Etude, as well as a position as a cultural adviser for the French Embassy. After returning to France in 1947, Lévi-Strauss then held a number of prestigious academic positions at the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique at the Musée de l'Homme in 1948, the École Pratique des Hautes Etudes in 1950, and finally the Chair in Social Anthropology at the College de France in 1958.

Influenced by such diverse thinkers as Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), Karl Marx (1818–1883), Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), Émile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss, Franz Boas, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), and Roman Jakobson (1896–1982) (see Scholte, 1973; Honneth, 1990; Roth, 1993; Darnell, 1995; Delacampagne and Trainmond, 1997; Johnson, 1997), Lévi-Strauss's understanding of experience cannot be understood outside of the context of his broader theoretical stance. To begin, Lévi-Strauss's structuralism had significant roots in Durkheimian sociology. Indeed, Lévi-Strauss often praised Durkheim for recognizing that one could not have an adequate sociology without admitting its necessary relationship to psychology (Lévi-Strauss, 1963a/1958 p. 3). Lévi-Strauss was also highly critical of Durkheim's project, however, inasmuch as it "affirms the primacy of the social over the intellect," and attempted to account for the formation of intellectual categories in the inarticulate and affective experiences of effervescence in collective ritual (Lévi-Strauss, 1966/1962, p. 97). As Scholte points out, "Lévi-Strauss simply cannot consider this 'call upon the inarticulate' an adequate explanation for sociocultural phenomena" (1973, p. 643). Honneth (1990) asserts that Lévi-Strauss's project therefore took shared symbolic thought to be a foundational given that cannot be further illumined through sociological investigation. It was instead psychology, linguistics, and anthropology that could best provide a window onto this "pre-social area . . . [that] is defined programmatically as the 'unconscious activity of the human mind'" (Honneth, 1990, p. 152). As Scholte explains:

Lévi-Strauss' argument is not linguistically reductionist. The substance of language does not provide the ultimate explanation for cultural phenomena; rather, both language and culture are the products of the unconscious brain . . . [his] reductionism is intellectual rather than linguistic, and cultural modalities are reduced to mental structures rather than to language behavior (1973, p. 659).

Lévi-Strauss's primary objective was thus to seek the generative source of cultural givens in the universal structures of the human brain. He held that it was unconscious mental structures that gave rise to the experiential vicissitudes of culturally mediated consciousness. Indeed, it was a movement from empirical and experiential diversity to conceptual and intellectual simplicity that guided much of Lévi-Strauss's structuralist vision. As Lévi-Strauss asserted, "beneath the diversity of human experience . . . invariant structures that are common to all societies [can be discerned]" (cited in Johnson, 1997, p. 123). And moreover, "[s]tarting from ethnographic experience, I have always aimed at drawing up an inventory of mental patterns, to reduce apparently arbitrary data to some kind of order, and to attain a level at which a kind of necessity becomes apparent, underlying the illusions of liberty" (Johnson, 1997, p. 123). In this paradigm, cultural products were therefore understood to be constrained by the limits imposed by the structural underpinnings of the human mind. These products were held to be expressions of the mind that generates them and were intelligible on that accord.

In his introduction to Marcel Mauss's *Sociologie et Anthropologie* (1950), Lévi-Strauss provided some additional insight into what often appeared to be his rather ambivalent understanding of experience. In this work, Lévi-Strauss voiced his appreciation of Mauss's attempt to demonstrate that the psychological realm of the individual is nothing other "than the translation on the [level of the] individual psyche of an essentially sociological structure" (cited in

Scholte, 1973, p. 644). Of great significance for this paper, we find that Lévi-Strauss also paid homage to Mauss's ideal of the "total social fact," where he conceded that "all valid interpretation must make the objectivity of historical or comparative analysis coincide with the subjectivity of *lived experience*" (cited in Scholte, 1973, p. 645; Lévi-Strauss, 1950, p. xxvi, emphasis added). Ultimately, however, Lévi-Strauss argued that phenomenological appeals to lived experience are in and of themselves always inadequate, since he held that the concept of experience is tied to the particular, contingent, individual, and often inexpressible affective and sensorial realm. He paid little attention to this "superficial," "idiosyncratic" realm of individual consciousness, however, for while:

ideas resulting from hazy and unelaborated attitudes . . . have an experiential character for each of us . . . [t]hese experiences, however, remain intellectually diffuse and emotionally intolerable unless they incorporate one or another of the patterns present in the group's culture. The assimilation of such patterns is the only means of objectivizing subjective states, of formulating inexpressible feelings, and of integrating inarticulated experiences into a system (Lévi-Strauss, 1963a/1958, pp. 171–172).

Lévi-Strauss's stance against phenomenological approaches to experience is significantly highlighted in the context of his long celebrated debate with Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980). Here Lévi-Strauss argued that Sartre's position was flawed for it was merely concerned with appearance and not reality (see Délacampagne and Traimond, 1997). In particular, Lévi-Strauss rejected Sartre's belief in the cumulative and progressive totalization of a subjective, historical consciousness (Scholte, 1973, p. 690). In fact, he believed that this position expressed little more than an ethnocentric and Eurocentric perspective that failed to take into account other types of subjectivity that are, for all intents and purposes, best characterized as "timeless." As Délacampagne and Traimond point out, Sartre's "historical consciousness is only an apparent meaning. This is never the correct meaning, because the 'real' meaning, like we have seen with Marx and Freud, is always hidden" (1997, p. 15, translated by author). It is therefore the case that Lévi-Strauss, in his opposition to Sartre, held that it was conceptual and not experiential phenomenon that constituted the "real."<sup>9</sup> Délacampagne and Traimond further argue that this debate reflected deeply held epistemological differences between these two thinkers, for Lévi-Strauss's "anti-empiricism" led him to:

consider the "concrete" of the concept to be superior to the "concrete" of experience, and thus he believed that to attain the real, we must begin by distancing ourselves from "lived experience." Sartre, on the other hand, on account of his phenomenological training, tended to respect above all the structures of experience as they are given to the consciousness of the subject (1997, p. 21, translated by author).

Lévi-Strauss's project was, therefore, thoroughly "anti-reflexive, anti-idealist, and anti-phenomenological" to its core (Scholte, 1973, p. 647). Indeed, this is further evident in what was Lévi-Strauss's long-standing opposition to the phenomenological philosophies of

9. Lévi-Strauss argued that between behavior (practice) and meaningful behavior (praxis) lies the conceptually grounded generative structure of the human mind. As he put it "Without questioning the undoubted primacy of infrastructures, I believe that there is always a mediator between praxis and practices, namely the conceptual scheme by the operation of which matter and form . . . are realized as structures, that is as entities which are both empirical and intelligible" (1963b/1962, p. 130). His position rests, therefore, on the idea that "in order for praxis to be living thought, it is necessary first . . . for thought to exist: that is to say, its initial conditions must be given in the form of an objective structure of the psyche and brain without which there would be neither praxis nor thought" (1963b/1962, pp. 263–264).



Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) and Paul Ricoeur (1913–). As Lévi-Strauss explained in *Triste Tropiques* (1955, p. 61), “Phenomenology I found unacceptable, in so far as it postulated a continuity between experience and reality.” As Scholte points out, Lévi-Strauss argued that phenomenology’s appeal to experience leads only to an illusory realm of subjectivity that cannot shed light on the scientific endeavor to “understand Being in relation to itself, and not in relation to oneself” (1973, p. 690). Lévi-Strauss’s project thus called for severing the ties between experience and reality, for “to reach reality one has first to reject experience, and then subsequently to reintegrate it into an objective synthesis devoid of any sentimentality” (1955, p. 61). Lévi-Strauss’s ultimate goal—to uncover the structural underpinnings of our experiential reality—thus requires “a scientific perspective . . . that radically severs the ‘habitual’ relations between lived experience and objective reality” (Scholte, 1973, p. 692).

In accord with his critical stance against phenomenology, in his work on *Totemism* (1963b/1962), Lévi-Strauss further argued that mythology and totemism are collective representations which are intellectual and social constructions that are not psychologically (individually) or experientially generated. As he put it, these phenomena “are *conceived*, not *experienced*” (1963b/1962, p. 63). This non-conceptual understanding of experience also led Lévi-Strauss to downplay the ultimate import of the “native’s point of view,” for an emphasis on experience does not lead us to an explanatory framework from which to account for the generative source of cultural products such as myth. As we saw above, Lévi-Strauss argued instead that the generative basis of mythology and totemism is grounded in unconscious mental structures, structures that are not held to be reflexively available to cultural participants. Indeed, he suggested that individuals are able to reflexively access only the phenomenal manifestations of those structures. For this reason, it was not the first-person perspective of cultural participants that was significant for Lévi-Strauss’s project, but the underlying structures that could be inferred only from a careful analysis of the manifest content of cultural forms. In other words, as Scholte observes, Lévi-Strauss believed that we “need to place any emic or indigenous reality in its proper context; not by destroying or mutilating its empirical reality, but by going beyond or behind such phenomenal manifestations” (1973, p. 682).

Additional insight into Lévi-Strauss’s understanding of experience can be found in the context of the first chapter of *The Savage Mind* (1966/1962). Here, Lévi-Strauss attempted to challenge Lévy-Bruhl’s concept of “prelogical thought” by asserting that “savage thought” is no less systematic or intellectual than “modern” varieties. After describing the ethnoscientific work of Charles Frake and others, Lévi-Strauss argued that the difference between “modern” scientific reasoning and “primitive” systems of classification is one of degree and not kind. To this end, he postulated a “science of the concrete” that served to characterize the systematic, empirically oriented thought patterns of the “savage mind.” With reference to the long held and at times heatedly debated philosophical distinction between “primary” and “secondary” qualities,<sup>10</sup> Lévi-Strauss asserted that the “qualities it [modern science] claimed at its

10. According to Locke (1979/1689), “primary qualities” were those qualities or powers adhering in objects that produce phenomenologically accessible ideas and sensations that reflect the “actual” properties of the object qua object (e.g., extension, solidity, motion, rest, shape, size, etc.). In contrast, “secondary qualities” are those qualities or powers that produce phenomenologically accessible ideas and sensations that, while they are ascribed to the object, do not reflect the “actual” properties of the object qua object (e.g., color, taste, smell, heat, cold). Locke argues that these “secondary qualities” are causally produced by the action and interaction of the “primary qualities” adhering in a given object. This Lockean distinction between “primary” and “secondary” qualities therefore establishes a logical “gap” between those ideas impressed upon the mind that serve to represent any given “material object” and the indirectly perceived mind-independent “material” that supposedly underlies and gives rise to those impressions.

outset as peculiarly scientific were precisely those which formed no part of living experience and remained outside and, as it were, unrelated to events. This is the significant notion of primary qualities"<sup>10</sup> (1966/1962, p. 21). In contrast, Lévi-Strauss held that the "science of the concrete," "for its part is imprisoned in the events and the experiences [constituted by "secondary qualities"] which it never tires of ordering and re-ordering in its search to find them a meaning" (1966/1962, p. 22).

In line with his somewhat ambivalent stance toward experience, it should be made clear that, while Lévi-Strauss believed that experience can ultimately be understood as reducible to its generative structural source, he further held that the experiential realm is not to be completely ignored. He argued instead that the search for underlying structure necessitates attention to the particularities of concrete, empirical referents. As Lévi-Strauss asserted in *The Savage Mind* (1966/1962, p. 58) "*the principle underlying a classification can never be postulated in advance*. It can only be discovered *a posteriori* by ethnographic investigation, that is, by experience" [emphasis in original]. Lévi-Strauss thus held that we must navigate the contingencies of the experiential and empirical realm in order to distill the "transempirical" residues that constitute the elementary structures of the human mind. Ultimately, as Scholte makes clear, however, "the relational logic of the synchronic, universal, and unconscious mind are said to generate the empirical givens of historical, particular, and conscious circumstances" (1973, p. 688).

Ultimately, I believe it is necessary to understand Lévi-Strauss as taking three positions with regard to the concept of experience. First, he held a firm "anti-anti-intellectualist stance" in his belief that experience was categorically cognitive and not affective. According to this model, it was only with the cognitive patterning of sensory and affective inputs that experience proper was thought to arise. As he put it in the context of a discussion of shamanic healing practices, "it is the transition to . . . verbal expression . . . [that makes] it possible to undergo in an ordered intelligible form, a *real experience* that would otherwise be chaotic and inexpressible" [emphasis mine] (1963a/1958, p. 198). Second, Lévi-Strauss qualified his understanding of experience with the terms "lived" or "sensory," which he took to be essentially equivalent to the direct sensation and bodily impressions of an external and potentially objective reality. For instance, he asserted that "all mythical thought and ritual consists in a reorganization of *sensory experience* within the context of a semantic system" [emphasis mine] (1963a/1958, p. 95). And finally theoretically, he ultimately dispensed altogether with both variants of experience for it is not experience but the underlying generative structure of the mind, which both precedes and serves to configure experience, that formed the basis of his structuralist theory.

#### CONCLUSION

While each of these thinkers evidences clearly unique understandings of experience, it is also possible to see important correspondences between their various definitions and usages of the construct. Most simply put, Durkheim, Lévy-Bruhl, and Lévi-Strauss each distinguished most generally between *immediate*—often strictly sensory and affective—and *mediate*—often conceptual and representational—varieties of experience. Each thinker, however, had very different ideas concerning the significance of either of these variants of experience.

Durkheim was perhaps the most balanced in his approach, seeking to understand the relationship between immediate and mediate experiences that was to some extent mutually informing. That is, Durkheim argued that collective representations importantly shaped the con-

tents of direct sensory experience, while further suggesting that affective and sensory varieties of experience played an important role in the formation of the fundamental categories of understanding in the context of experiences generated in collective ritual. While Durkheim often emphasized the significance of the faculty of reason in the patterning of experience, the fact that he argued that categories of thought were themselves formed through collectively generated non-conceptual feelings served to ensure that neither immediate nor mediate varieties of experience were privileged.

With Lévy-Bruhl, we find that he first utilized experience in three distinct ways: (1) as direct sensory data, (2) as organized by collective representations and yet infused with emotional and imaginal contents, and (3) as purely cognitive forms of inference. In his later work, Lévy-Bruhl was explicitly critical of what he held to be Western philosophy's largely cognitively biased view of experience. Moreover, in attempting to distance himself from his earlier controversial distinctions between "primitive" and "non-primitive" mentalities, Lévy-Bruhl turned to champion the role of affect, sensation, and imagination in both ordinary and non-ordinary varieties of experience.

Finally, Lévi-Strauss presented us with the most clearly cognitivist rendering of experience. While he also relied on the distinction between immediate and mediate varieties of experience, and while he did often refer to "lived experience" and "sensory experience" in the context of his writings, he was decidedly against the idea that experience can be construed as purely sensory or affective without the ordering imposition of the universal cognitive structures of the human mind. As we have seen above, Lévi-Strauss's structuralism ultimately dispensed with experience in favor of turning toward an examination of what the contents of experience could tell us about these same neo-Kantian, pre-given, mental structures.

We thus see in early French anthropology a range of definitions and usages of experience that clearly encapsulated not only cognitive, but also affective, sensory, motoric, and non-intellectualist variants as well. In this respect, the work of these writers has in many ways importantly prefigured the concerns of those recent theorists of experience in anthropology who have pointed to what they view to be the largely unquestioned adherence to a "cognitive," "subjectivist," "hermeneutical," and "coherent" understanding of experience in the discipline of anthropology and beyond (cf., Mattingly, 1998; Throop, 2003a).

In conclusion, it seems that the influence of these thinkers on modern anthropological theories of experience should not be restricted to viewing their ideas as merely contributing to the passive shaping of those views in anthropology that are held to largely conform to what is held by some to be the overly intellectualist understanding of experience found in much of Western philosophy. Instead, they should also be remembered for advancing theories of experience that seldom rely on any one simplistic definition, but, in contrast, draw upon relatively complex, and at times contradictory, understandings of experience that largely defy any simplistic categorization according to what Calvin O. Schrag (1969) has insightfully labeled elsewhere "coherence" or "granulated" theories. For these reasons, turning to re-examine the work of these three French thinkers in the context of the theorizing of experience in current anthropological writings might just provide some new insights for emerging inquiries in the field into the varieties and structures of experience cross-culturally (see Desjarlias, 1994, 1997; Mattingly, 1998; Throop, 2002, 2003a, 2003b).

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