

**AN INSIDE LOOK AT
DR. RALPH G. O'SULLIVAN'S BODY OF WORK**

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Ralph G. O'Sullivan is a long-time friend of *Free Inquiry In Creative Sociology (FICS)*. Not only is he a frequent contributor, he is our very best external reviewer. He has reviewed countless manuscripts and prepared thoughtful, constructive, and thorough evaluations of many of our submissions— all with turnaround times of one to two weeks. Due to such commitment and scope of work, the Editors of *FICS* dedicate this special issue to him, allowing him to select previous articles for this issue as we learned more about him and his writings.

Dr. O'Sullivan received his B.S. and M.A. degrees in sociology from Eastern Illinois University. His Ph.D. in sociology was obtained from Western Michigan University. His high school history teacher, Mr. Leroy Greffin, showed him that alternative sources and methods of presentation can be just as enlightening as arcane and pedantic ones; and his E.I.U. professor' and good friend, Dr. Richard Hummel, taught him to dig deep and expand generously and reasonably. These mentors, and his diversified publication record, helped shape Dr. O'Sullivan's domain beliefs about writing sociology that he uses as reminders to himself.

The first work of the issue is "**Cursillo in Social Movement Literature**" (*FICS* 1997 25:2). It was his third article on the religious move-

ment. Similar to this one, the others, including a fourth, article discuss elements of Cursillo. His article identifies Cursillo as a redemptive *religious* movement, and that distinction is important. Dr. O'Sullivan considers this article his most formal piece as it addresses the social *movement* dimensions of Cursillo at the macro-, the middle-range, and the micro-levels of analyses. The macro-approach, social strain theory, shows that the Cursillo movement is one response to attacks against religion and Christianity. Faithful witnesses rally together to reaffirm their beliefs, identities, and sense of purpose— a theme that Dr. O'Sullivan reprises in a current piece in *FICS* addressing culture wars against religion.

After 25+ years of teaching, Dr. O'Sullivan left academia for private industry. "**Voluntary Serfdom: An Ideological Journey into Dual-Class Labor Conflicts and Possible Workers' Solutions**" (*FICS* 2002 30: 2) was a case study of a harsh work environment where management and labor were at loggerheads, and Dr. O'Sullivan was a member of the labor force. He borrowed ideas from Marx and from Seeman as they formed an infrastructure to assess the workers' plight and possible means of adaptation via his second adaptation of Merton's goals-means scheme. Originally used in his article "Congregation

Switching and Religious Revitalization" (*FICS* 1995 23:1), he adapts Merton again to illustrate how disgruntled wage earners can adapt to an abusive and dangerous workplace.

"Fictional Reality and the Portrayal of Justice in Modern Sociology and Contemporary Novels" (*FICS* 2006 34:2) was his first directed use of literature to illustrate sociology. Dr. O'Sullivan had cobbled together a course in criminal justice for prison inmates. A friend suggested that he read some novels by James Lee Burke and by Kathy Reichs. He became acquainted with various novels given to him by family and friends to include writings by Alafair Burke, J.L. Burke, Patricia Cornwell, Janet Evanovich, and Sue Grafton. On separate visits to the local library, he found novels by Nevada Barr as well as ones originated by Oliver North. While on leave from his job for a workplace injury for a period of six months, he read more than one hundred novels by the identified writers. Dr. O'Sullivan commented that after reviewing the occupations of the stories' protagonists, and the type of justice discussed in his course were recalled, the article began to take shape.

Most of the authors' backgrounds prepared them to describe their star characters as they did: The stories were not autobiographical and the authors did not write as autoethnography, so Dr. O'Sullivan used the term "near-autobiography" to reflect the novelists' intimacy with their tales. The main characters in the books held a wide variety of jobs that he collapsed into more or less common occupational categories and the types of

justice they served. The article, however, served another purpose, as the second of three pieces concerned with social deviance and labeling theory. The first of these, "Moral Entrepreneurs, Local Morality, and Labeling Processes" (*FICS* 1994 22:1), expanded H.S. Becker's two *moral entrepreneur* categories of *rule creators* (legislators) and *rule enforcers* (police) to include *rule interpreters*. Dr. O'Sullivan then used his article about novels to extend the list of moral entrepreneurs as they pertain to the occupations of the protagonists. The third thematic installment is in **"Combining Merton's Strain Theory with Moral Entrepreneurs"** (*FICS* 2010 38:2). *Rule influencers* try to shape the judgments of rule creators with moral appeals, or bribes. *Rule pretenders*, like Merton's ritualists, feign conformity, "going along to get along," avoiding the consequences of overt disagreement. *Rule avoiders*, like Merton's retreatists, believe that rules are unjustly imposed, so they "drop out," seeking alternative meanings for themselves, as in B.F. Skinner's novel *Walden Two* that Dr. O'Sullivan discussed in his 2011 *FICS* article "Social Shepherding and Moral Nets as Found in Some Novels by Fyodor Dostoevsky, James A. Michener, George Orwell, B.F. Skinner, and C.S. Forester." (*FICS* 39: 1).

In his article, **"Social Variance as It Exists Between Conformity and Deviance: Following Some Advice from Ogburn,"** (*FICS* 2007 35:1) Dr. O'Sullivan introduces social variance as what exists between conformity and deviance in modern sociology. He holds that novelists often exist on the

periphery of core social institutions and hold ideas about key social and sociological issues in a manner that an audience can readily access and easily understand. Dr. O'Sullivan's writing demonstrates that conformity and deviance are created in the very process of norm construction which dictates what we should and should not do.

Dr. O'Sullivan's "**Shaping Visual Sound: A Friendly Look at Total Institutions and Their Role in the Subculture of Competitive Marching Music**" (*FICS* 2008 36:1) is one of his two favorites—the other is the one about his grandfather. The article represents another "perfect storm" of causality. Dr. O'Sullivan found only two written accounts of participation in competitive music and no reflections in the social sciences as he prepared his article. He hoped to fill that void as readers gained some insight about the positive effects of total institutionalization in this sensory rich *visual sound* subculture that is comprised of "artistry, ambition, athleticism, and awards." This article combine his insider's voice from "back in the day," observations of the type that prompted the study, interviews, daily score-keeping from field competitions, and the use of some electronic archives. It was in one of these, Dr. O'Sullivan says, that he came across a picture of his drum and bugle corps, the Berwyn Blue Knights from Berwyn, IL, in a parade where he was in the drum line.

Unlike the other articles in this issue, "**Culture Wars Against Religion and a Gathering of Triangulated Responses to Them**" is a new article that addresses modern claims about culture wars against religion, putting

them into historical contexts and lending support to his previous article on the social movement of Cursillo. It is included in this issue due to convenient timing, so Dr. O'Sullivan addressed it in the same ways as he did for the other inclusions. This article has three meanings. The first is that it combines elements of social psychology with historical specificity to the three paradigms discussed in "Cursillo in Social Movement Literature" article—social strain, resource mobilization, and expectancy-value. The second consideration is that external sets of information sometimes appear unexpectedly, creating useful alliances with original thoughts. The third element of importance for this article, and all submissions, is the role of the peer review process. Dr. O'Sullivan received opposing comments about his original submission so he addressed the constructive ones in his revision.

This summarizes the works of Dr. O'Sullivan that appear in this volume of articles. We hope that our readership will enjoy reading them as much as the editorial staff did in compiling them. Contact Dr. O'Sullivan directly at: 230 N. Louise Street, Chillocothe, IL 61523, rgodoc@hotmail.com.

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