



Artificial Social Relations in Modern America

John L. Caughey

American Quarterly, Vol. 30, No. 1. (Spring, 1978), pp. 70-89.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-0678%28197821%2930%3A1%3C70%3AASRIMA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-6>

American Quarterly is currently published by The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/jhup.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

ARTIFICIAL SOCIAL RELATIONS IN MODERN AMERICA

JOHN L. CAUGHEY
University of Maryland

IN SEVERAL OF HIS ESSAYS THE ANTHROPOLOGIST A. I. HALLOWELL ARGUED that social scientists have taken an erroneously narrow approach in their investigations of social organization. Emphasizing the importance of understanding another society from the inside, that is, in terms of the cognition of its members, Hallowell showed that non-Western social systems commonly include categories of beings other than those "real" humans with whom an individual engages in actual face-to-face relations. Among the Ojibwa Indians it is taken for granted that additional "persons," such as thunder gods, fabulous giant monsters, and deceased ancestors, not only exist but interact with human beings. Many of these encounters seem to involve dreams and other "hallucinatory" states of mind but they are an important part of the individual's subjective social experience:

In other words, the "social" relations of the self when considered in its total behavioral environment may be far more inclusive than ordinarily conceived. The self in its relations with other selves may transcend the boundaries of social life as objectively defined. This is a fact of some psychological importance since it is relevant to the needs, motivations, and goals of individuals under certain circumstances.¹

The more deeply we penetrate the world view of the Ojibwa the more apparent it is that "social relations" between human beings (*anicinavek*) and other-than-human "persons" are of cardinal significance.²

While Hallowell was concerned with incorporating "supernatural beings" into the analysis of social organization, his approach has wider implications.

¹ A. I. Hallowell, "The Self and Its Behavioral Environment," in his *Culture and Experience* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1955), 92.

² A. I. Hallowell, "Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior, and World View," in S. Diamond, ed., *Culture in History* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1960), 22-23.

The perspective he suggests directs attention to other important but neglected social relations and his suggestions about the study of non-Western social systems could be fruitfully adopted in the investigation of contemporary American society.¹

The "real social world" of an American consists of the people with whom he *actually interacts*. Commonly numbering only two or three hundred persons, this group consists of various relatives, friends, and acquaintances. While such relationships are important, the average American knows about a swarming throng of other beings who may be significant to him but with whom he never engages in actual face-to-face relations. First of all, this "artificial social world" includes all those beings that are known to the individual via television, radio, movies, books, magazines, and newspapers. Within this group are numerous actors, musicians, authors, politicians, columnists, announcers, disc jockeys, talk-show hosts, and other "celebrities" as well as all the characters in all the novels, biographies, plays, movies, TV shows, and comic strips that are "familiar" to him. The enormous number of beings in this artificial social world includes several times as many "persons" as those in his real social world.

To take one example, it is common for an American to know a great deal about hundreds of different sports figures. He knows about their teams, positions, and salaries, he knows about their past accomplishments and medical histories, and he knows about their personalities and off-the-field conduct. Despite such knowledge the average fan does not *actually interact* with members of this group. Even if he has met several such people, there are hundreds more he knows about but will never meet.

While an American does not have real face-to-face interactions with media figures, he does have *artificial interactions* with them. Every time he enters a theater, turns on a media machine, or opens a book or magazine, he slips mentally out of the real social world and enters the world of vicarious artificial experience. The intensity of such media relations can be very high:

I spent . . . Sundays with a few bottles of beer at the Parrot, eyes fixed on the television screen, cheering for my team. Cheering is a paltry description.

¹ The comparative perspective used in this essay was gained, in part, from field work in Micronesia. See John Caughey, *Fúanakkar: Cultural Values in a Micronesian Society* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Publications in Anthropology, no. 2, 1977). I have also drawn on observations made during a field study on the psychiatric ward of an urban hospital. However, most of the data used here come from published sources and interviews and survey work with approximately 250 people associated with a large urban university. Although these sources suggest that the patterns discussed here are widespread, they probably vary a great deal among the complex subcultures of contemporary America.

dislike particular celebrities, informants sometimes use terminology associated with the evaluation of performers (e.g., "talented," "entertaining," "successful"); more commonly they evaluate media beings personally, as if describing someone's style in actual social interaction. Those they dislike are characterized as "shallow," "phony," "self-centered," "manipulative," "dishonest," "obnoxious," "pompous," "crude," and "snobbish." Some people express their feelings by specifying similar real relationships, describing one media being as "like everyone's kid sister," another as "a father figure" or "a friend." Others relate to media images romantically and actually speak of being in love with them.

A favorite topic of debate in commentary on mass communications is the question of the social *effects* of media experience, especially the extent to which exposure to violence induces viewers to behave aggressively in the real world.²⁶ This heavily researched but unresolved question points to another set of connections between real and artificial social experience. A simple loop diagram illustrates how this process has been traditionally conceptualized.



Because of his actual social experience, the individual creates certain kinds of internal imaginary productions or seeks certain kinds of media material. In turn, this artificial experience influences the way he conducts himself on returning to the actual social world.

Questions about this process can be asked at various levels. First there is the problem of cultural and subcultural influences. As McQuail suggests, "The link between patterns of media use and cultural variations has never been systematically explored. . . ."²⁷ Much the same can be said about other forms of artificial experience; the evidence indicates that such links exist but their nature remains unclear. Schneider and Sharp offer data from a comparative study which suggests that the incidence of certain apparently universal dream experiences, including aggression, varies from society to society. In certain Pacific societies (e.g., Ifaluk) the dreamer is never the aggressor while in others (e.g., Baiga) he often is.²⁸

In some cases psychodynamic factors have been used to explain such

²⁶ See Robert Baker and Sandra Bell, *Mass Media and Violence* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1968).

²⁷ Denis McQuail, *Towards a Sociology of Mass Communications* (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1969), 41.

²⁸ David M. Schneider and Lauriston Sharp, *The Dream Life of a Primitive People* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1969). See also Dorothy Eggan, "Dream Analysis" in Bert Kaplan, ed., *Studying Personality Cross-Culturally* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), 56.

phenomena; widespread emotional conflicts are said to produce compensating dreams as well as projective mass media materials including popular literature.²⁹ Cognitive factors are also involved because people dream (as well as fantasize, remember, and project) in terms of the "grammar" by which their culture orders social relations. A review of the dreams in Schneider and Sharp's collection shows that Australian tribesmen dream of culturally standardized social activities (such as spear fishing), standard social connections (such as totemic clan membership), and standard ceremonies (such as mortuary feasts), all of which are characteristic in their actual experience.³⁰

In any society, artificial experiences are influenced by the social positions people occupy; different age groups not only prefer different media productions, they also show different patterns of daydreaming.³¹ Social circumstances also play a part. As Katz and Lazarsfeld suggest, escapist media provide a direct "substitute for socializing activity"³² — if his social situation is dissatisfying an individual may compensate with artificial companions. When a person accustomed to company at dinner must dine alone, he typically substitutes artificial beings by way of a book, newspaper, or TV program. It is, of course, not just "escapist fare" which serves this function; any media offering provides the pseudo-companionship of a "voice in the house."³³ Memories, daydreams, and projections are also used to offset loneliness. A dramatic example is the "release binge fantasy" of inmates in total institutions.³⁴

But what are the effects of artificial experience when an individual returns to the world of actual social interaction?³⁵ A variety of contradictory theories have been offered; some stress "tension raising" effects, others "cathartic" or "narcotizing" effects.³⁶ While cognition was ignored in earlier studies, recent work has recognized that mass communications "do not directly mediate behavior" and that the primary effect of a message must occur "at the level of the image a person has organized — 'inside the black box'."³⁷ Since previous experience, real or artificial, can only influence

²⁹ See, for example, Abram Kardiner, *The Psychological Frontiers of Society* (New York: Columbia, 1945).

³⁰ Schneider and Sharp, *Dream Life of a Primitive People*.

³¹ Singer, *Day Dreaming*, 171-92.

³² Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influence* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1955), 378.

³³ Klapper, *The Effects of Mass Communications*, 175.

³⁴ Erving Goffman, *Asylums* (New York: Doubleday, 1960), 50.

³⁵ According to Plank the American space program has been motivated by a "desire to verify the existence of imagined beings." Robert Plank, *The Emotional Significance of Imaginary Beings* (Springfield: Thomas, 1968), 6.

³⁶ See Seymour Feshbach, "The Stimulating vs. Cathartic Effects of Vicarious Aggressive Activity," *Journal of Abnormal Social Psychology*, 63 (1961), 381-85.

³⁷ Roberts, "The Nature of Communication Effects," in Schramm and Roberts, 363.

overt behavior if it is "stored" in such a way as consciously or unconsciously to influence decisions about how to act, any cognitive approach to the problem depends, in part, on how media information is retained in memory. Contrary to some theories, media experience does not quickly "evaporate." "Trivia quizzes" show that people remember minute details from media productions that were witnessed years in the past.³⁸

Presumably social behavior is occasionally influenced by the directives previously issued by "advisors," and an enormous number of artificial beings serve in this role. Whether you want "how to do it" information on administering first aid, running a successful business, picking up beautiful girls, being popular, enjoying sex, avoiding probate, or hypnotizing friends, artificial advisors abound. While the effectiveness of persuasive media offerings was downplayed in earlier studies, this literature has been critically reassessed³⁹ and some media advisors (e.g., Dr. Benjamin Spock) have had considerable impact.

Even more important is the knowledge obtained from using other people as positive (or negative) role models. As Murray and Kluckhohn observe, "Ego ideals run all the way from the Master Criminal to the Serene Sage. They are imaginatively created and recreated in the course of development in response to patterns offered by the environment — mythological, historical, or living exemplars."⁴⁰ As they imply, ego ideals are drawn from artificial as well as real social experience.

Although its significance is questioned by some writers, imitative role-modeling can occur shortly after media experience.⁴¹ This imitation is not confined to children. Interview surveys such as the soap opera studies of Warner and Henry show that many viewers believe these programs have provided them with useful information for coping with their lives.⁴² Some members of the audience use this material as a script for conduct in the real world, as when a woman borrowed a favorite character's words in offering condolence to a bereaved friend.⁴³

³⁸ Siegel, "Effects of Media Violence," in *ibid.*, 632.

³⁹ McQuail, *Towards a Sociology of Mass Communications*, 46–47.

⁴⁰ Henry Murray and Clyde Kluckhohn, "A Conception of Personality," in Kluckhohn and Henry Murray, eds., *Personality in Nature, Society, and Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1953), 40.

⁴¹ J. P. Flanders, "A Review of Research on Imitative Behavior," *Psychological Bulletin*, 69 (1961), 316–37.

⁴² W. Lloyd Warner and William Henry, "Radio Day Time Serial: A Symbolic Analysis," *Genetic Psychology Monographs*, 37 (1948), 3–71. See also W. Lloyd Warner, *American Life: Dream and Reality* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1962).

⁴³ Herta Herzog, "What Do We Really Know About Daytime Serial Listeners," in Paul Lazarsfeld and Frank Stanton, eds., *Radio Research* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1944), 27.

While such direct consequences of advice and imitation can sometimes be demonstrated, an adequate approach to the effects of media experience demands more complex considerations. As Roberts suggests, the "true effect of a message may be more or less subtle, far reaching, and complex than any (traditional) observable measures can indicate."⁴⁴ It appears that some of these more subtle effects may be discovered by examining the impact of mass communications on other kinds of artificial experience such as dreams, daydreams, and projections. Two questions seem crucial: 1) what effects do media productions have on these internal cognitive processes? and 2) what relationships do these inner forms of artificial experience have on subsequent behavior? Preliminary attempts to answer these questions suggest that the simple loop diagram illustrated earlier is not an adequate representation of the relation between media experience and actual behavior.⁴⁵ The most direct way in which internal artificial experience affects overt behavior is through projections.

Consider how an ordinary day is put together. You awaken, and as you lie in bed, or perhaps as you move slowly about in a protective shell of morning habits, you think about what the day will be like—it will be hot, it will be cold; there is too much to do, there is nothing to fill the time; you promised to see him, she may be there again today. . . . You *imagine* what your day is going to be and you make *plans* to cope with it.⁴⁶

Miller and his colleagues suggest that rough sketchy anticipations are often sufficient, but graphic and detailed imaginings also occur. During such anticipations various possibilities are typically considered and alternative courses of action are tried out, rejected, or refined.⁴⁷ As Roberts implies, media experience is probably particularly important when a person anticipates situations that he has not previously encountered first hand.⁴⁸ Since there are few social scenes for which he has not yet been vicariously socialized, this influence is likely to be significant.

Such considerations have implications for the study of violence. One estimate suggests that "between the ages of 5 and 14, the average American

⁴⁴ Roberts "The Nature of Communication Effects," 363.

⁴⁵ The artist's artificial experience (including fantasies about his imagined audience) also influences the work he creates. See I. DeSola Pool and I. Shulman, "Newsmen's Fantasies, Audiences, and Newswriting," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 23 (1959), 145-58.

⁴⁶ Miller et al., *Plans and the Structure of Behavior*, 5.

⁴⁷ Significant roles are played by imagined versions of real people. "The imagined reactions of various others to these vicarious performances constitute important criteria for evaluating any possible plans of overt action similar in content to these vicarious performances." George J. McCall and J. L. Simmons, *Identities and Interactions* (New York: Free Press, 1966), 69.

⁴⁸ Roberts, "The Nature of Communication Effects," 521.

child has witnessed the violent destruction of 13,000 human beings on television alone."⁴⁹ Whether or not this artificial experience fosters antisocial activity, it certainly provides Americans with a vast repertoire of plans for injuring, torturing, and killing other people.⁵⁰

Projections are connected with actual behavior, but dreams and daydreams may also be important. As the popularity of do-it-yourself dream interpretation manuals show, non-Western peoples are not the only ones who take their dreams seriously. Like the Seneca Indians, followers of Jungian psychoanalytic belief systems interpret dreams as significant messages from the unconscious, messages which may have considerable import for deciding how to behave.⁵¹ Daydreams and associated play may also be significant. Depending on its complexity, merely having observed a social routine may not allow the individual to do it himself. After media exposure, the individual may "practice" a routine prior to using it in his actual social relationships.

As basic forms of inner experience, dreams and daydreams have an indirect influence on the development of attitudes, values, and psychological sets. To an unknown degree the media have influenced the forms and contents of this interior psychic life. Certainly the *dramatis personae*, as well as the social situations of dreams and daydreams, are frequently derived from the media. The media also contribute to the individual's stock of knowledge and even if it is never used overtly in actual behavior, it may still have a considerable psychological impact in that it may be extensively drawn on in dreams and daydreams. While few informants had committed serious acts of violence, many reported killings, rapes, and other aggressive activities in their imaginative experience. Conversely, Schneider and Sharp report that members of certain Pacific societies never have dreams in which they commit aggression.⁵²

Real and artificial social relations also overlap, as in situations in which a person simultaneously interacts with both real and artificial beings. Two people may "visit" while watching a TV program; in some cases, they switch their attention back and forth between the two worlds, while at other times they attend to both. The typical American "date" often follows such

⁴⁹ Otto Larsen, quoted by DeFleur, *Theories of Mass Communication*, 136.

⁵⁰ In one survey, most people (43 out of 47, 91%) said they knew how to use a chair as a weapon. Only a few (5 out of 47, 11%) claimed to have actually seen a chair used as a weapon, but most (34 out of 47, 72%) remembered seeing a chair used as a weapon in the media.

⁵¹ Anthony F. C. Wallace, "Dreams and the Wishes of the Soul," *American Anthropologist*, 60 (1958), 234-38.

⁵² Schneider and Sharp, *Dream Life of a Primitive People*, 56.

a pattern. A young man and woman, attending a movie or play together, may be separately involved in the same public fantasy (the movie) while still retaining some minimal "real" contact, perhaps by holding hands. This kind of date, so common in early stages of courtship, permits the couple to be "together" but removes the strain of confronting each other directly.

Simultaneous real and artificial interaction also involves internal channels. After leaving a movie, people can recall and comment on their personal reactions to the artificial social events they have just independently experienced together. Memories about a shared real past may function similarly, as when old friends mentally relive and simultaneously converse about images of their previous social activities ("remember the time we . . ."). While half listening to another's conversation, a person may imagine an upcoming encounter with someone else. A more dramatic example occurs when a man and a woman engaged in sexual intercourse are also each "away," i.e., experiencing separate sexual fantasies with artificial beings.

Goffman has suggested that definite rules govern the ways in which an individual who is physically present in a social situation may demonstrably involve himself in an "away."⁵³ While he refers to "internal emigrations," similar considerations apply to media involvements. These rules often specify the kinds of attention an individual owes in real relationships as opposed to those which he may legitimately devote to artificial relations he is also engaged in. A person is usually expected to abandon or lower his participation in the artificial world whenever a pressing claim is advanced by present real others (e.g., "It's time for supper," or "Someone is knocking on the door"). Tardiness in "coming back" usually calls for apologies. The presence of these rules is often revealed by their transgression and people may become seriously annoyed when they receive less attention than artificial others. In many middle-class households, it is offensive for an individual to read at the dinner table. The seasonal laments of "football widows" constitute another case in point. Professional advice givers such as "Dear Abby" sometimes describe other examples. One woman worried about the time and attention her husband lavished on "girlie magazines." Another complained that her husband was angry when she revealed her fantasies.⁵⁴ Here artificial others are perceived as rivals.

There are other situations in which artificial experience overlaps with real relationships by providing people with pseudo "mutual acquaintances." Fan club members may come together out of their mutual attraction to a celebrity whom none of them have actually encountered face-to-face. Possession of socially usable knowledge about artificial beings is important in

⁵³ Goffman, *Behavior in Public Places*, 69.

⁵⁴ Abigail Van Buren, "Dear Abby," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Nov. 10, 1972, p. 10; July 30, 1976, p. 46.

many other interactions as well. One study of blue collar workers showed that a large majority (85%) regularly read newspaper comic strips, and that most of them habitually discuss them with each other.⁵⁵ In other social circles, analogous information is de rigueur; competent actual social participation often requires particular kinds of artificial experience.

Everyone in America is expected to be familiar with an extensive series of artificial beings, and these mutual acquaintances often give strangers (e.g., in bars, taxicabs, airplanes) a basis for socializing. There has been speculation that this information provides strangers with a safe basis for communicating,⁵⁶ but expressing a "wrong" attitude about a celebrity ("Don't you just love Joe Namath") would seem as disruptive to incipient solidarity as disagreements about the true character of actual mutual acquaintances. The fact that everyone is required to know about artificial beings is shown by diagnostic examinations on mental wards. Here inability to answer questions about beings they don't know (e.g., "name the last four presidents") is considered symptomatic of mental "abnormality."

Most of the time most people are capable of distinguishing what we have called the artificial and the real social worlds. Even when deeply engrossed in an artificial experience, most people are aware that what seems to be taking place "before their eyes" is in fact an illusion. Temporary "suspension of disbelief" is generally accompanied by a thread of awareness that the illusion is only an illusion. Even when a brutal murder is portrayed on the screen, the psychological response of the audience is different from what they would experience if they witnessed a similar action in the real world. Also — as indicated above — people are usually capable of "coming back" to the real world whenever this is necessary.

There are, however, a number of interesting areas where the line between the real and the artificial becomes hazy. In the first place, there is the realm of psychopathology. The thinking of certain kinds of "psychotics" is characterized by systematic but socially inappropriate beliefs about artificial social relations. While probing this area of "confusion" during mental examinations, psychiatrists, as arbiters of cultural appropriateness, often employ a distinction between real and artificial relations. They demand that "normals" *know about* our stock of national artificial beings but they also look for pathological claims that the patient *actually knows* these beings. Such questions as, "Do you have any important friends?" are intended to uncover delusionary claims that the patient is a close associate of some famous political or religious figure. Other "paranoid schizophrenics" claim

⁵⁵ Leo Bogart, "Adult Talk about Newspaper Comics," *American Journal of Sociology*, 61 (1955), 26-30.

⁵⁶ Klapper, *The Effects of Mass Communication*, 203.

relations with imaginary beings. After dreaming up a set of artificial others, what Cameron calls the "pseudo community,"⁵⁷ they behave as if they believed these others were actual acquaintances. In still other cases the patient claims a grandiose identity, often that of some famous artificial being, and behaves towards others as if it were actually his own.⁵⁸ In all such cases the individual displays an apparent inability (or unwillingness) to make culturally appropriate distinctions between reality and imagination. Does this mean the person is psychotic? If confusion between real and artificial social relations is evidence of insanity, then estimates about the number of American psychotics must be greatly increased.

While asleep and dreaming, most people are sometimes unable to perceive that the interactions they think they are engaging in are in fact hallucinatory. Delusions about the reality of media interactions are also common. People exposed for the first time to movies may believe that what appears on the screen is actually taking place before them. According to Knight, early U.S. movie audiences reacted this way:

And there is no doubting that they accepted the flat flickering images as reality. When locomotives thundered down the track, when waves rolled towards the camera, people in the front rows ran screaming for the exits.⁵⁹

Another well-documented example of mass confusion is the "War of the Worlds" broadcast by Orson Welles.⁶⁰

People often talk about an imaginary being, such as a comic strip character, as if he actually existed and as if they actually knew him. Sometimes this sort of dialogue is a linguistic convention; in other cases the evidence suggests genuine confusion. Sherlock Holmes receives hundreds of letters a year at 221-B Baker Street, and the current occupants of this address, a large mortgage organization, have been obliged to assign a secretary to answer his mail. According to the secretary, not only children but "... older men and women who ought to know better can't seem to realize that he [Sherlock] never really lived."⁶¹

Another point of overlap between real and artificial relations occurs when an individual confronts an impersonation of a being, or an actual being, he has known previously by artificial channels. Children often interact

⁵⁷ Norman Cameron, "The Paranoid Pseudo-Community Revisited," *American Journal of Sociology*, 65 (1959), 52-58.

⁵⁸ See Milton Rokeach, *The Three Christs of Ypsilanti* (New York: Random House, 1964).

⁵⁹ Arthur Knight, *The Liveliest Art* (New York: Mentor, 1957), 22.

⁶⁰ Hadley Cantril, "The Invasion from Mars," in Schramm and Roberts, 579-95.

⁶¹ Robert G. Deindorfur, "Dear Sherlock Holmes," *Parade Magazine* (November 19, 1972), 11.

in imaginary roles ("You be Tonto and I'll be the Lone Ranger"). This sort of play, like adult costume parties and amateur dramatics, involves a double awareness; the child behaves towards the other as if he were Tonto while knowing that he is only his neighborhood friend. Disneyland and Disney World represent rich locations for the study of this phenomenon. One informant reported the following experience. A group of young people on vacation in Florida attempted to visit Disney World. However, they were wearing long hair and "hippie" clothing and were refused admittance at the gate. The reason offered was that, dressed in "your dirty clothes," "you just don't look like normal people." Meanwhile, in the background, grotesque, plastic representations of monstrous animal-human beings such as "Mickey Mouse" and "Donald Duck" mingled with those fortunate enough to have gained admission.

The most widespread instance of imaginary impersonation occurs each December when thousands of Santa Clauses traditionally make their appearance. Young children are encouraged to approach the impersonator as if he actually were Santa Claus. This again points to the cross-over between imagination and reality, and it raises questions about the definition of socially acceptable delusions. It is appropriate for a young child to believe in Santa Claus and to believe that he can communicate with him. It would be considered pathological for an adult to express such beliefs. It is appropriate for both adult and child to believe in God, but in some social contexts (including the psychiatric evaluations on certain mental wards) it is taken as a sign of mental illness for an individual to claim that he receives communications from Him. Logically this might be taken as evidence that psychiatrists assume God is dead or at least dumb, or perhaps, that he only communicates with persons who are mentally ill. Actually, in this context, belief in God is regarded as a socially acceptable delusion while belief in communications from God is not.

Sometimes, of course, people actually meet a "well-known" celebrity in a chance encounter, at a "personal appearance," or by tracking him down in his private life. Culturally recognized categories of celebrity seekers range from "autograph hunters" to "groupies." Whatever the situation, the individual's dealings with the celebrity are influenced by his previous artificial experience, as when an actor is approached as the imaginary character he portrays in a TV series. Such misperception becomes more complex when the individual takes a media celebrity, develops an elaborate imaginary relationship with him via internal channels as well as media relations, and subsequently uses this as a basis for dealing with him in some real social encounter. Artificial romance is a good example.

The following events are described in "A Report to Felony Court." After attending a professional baseball game in April 1947, a sixteen-year-old

girl, A., began to develop a strong attachment or "crush" on Chicago Cubs' first baseman Eddie Waitkus. It became a highly intense, totally one-sided, artificial romance. A. frequently went to baseball games in order to see Waitkus play, and with other girls, she sometimes waited afterwards to watch for him when the players left the stadium. However, she hid herself and never actually approached him to talk or get his autograph. She collected all kinds of media information about him, including press clippings and photographs, and at night was accustomed to spreading these out in a kind of shrine. She slept with one of his pictures under her pillow. She became concerned about 36, his uniform number, and because of his background developed a strong interest in things associated with Lithuania and Boston (e.g., she wanted baked beans "constantly"). This artificial romance also affected many of her actual relationships. For example, she talked about "Eddie" sentimentally and "incessantly" with family and girlfriends.

She also engaged in a variety of external and internal artificial relations with him. She talked out loud to pictures of him, dreamed about him, held imaginary conversations with him, and had projections and fantasies about meeting, dating, and marrying him. When he was traded to another team, she cried for a day and a night saying that she could not live if he "went away"; she "wanted him for her boyfriend."

The relationship went on for many months, but, as A. put it, "After a year went by and I was still crazy about him I decided to do something about it." She decided to resolve the situation by murdering Waitkus; ". . . I knew I would never get to know him in a normal way, so I kept thinking I will never get him and if I can't have him nobody else can. And then I decided I would kill him." In June 1949, learning that he was staying there with his team, A. checked into a Chicago hotel. She talked with him for the first time on the hotel phone (she was "shocked" at the way he spoke), and asked him to come up to her room about "something important." When he arrived she pulled out a gun and said, "For two years you have been bothering me, and now you are going to die." Then she shot him in the stomach. In the uproar which followed she was disappointed and angry that people in neighboring hotel rooms were so "dumb" that they "didn't know who Eddie Waitkus was."⁶²

This case illustrates a number of points we have made about artificial social relationships. It shows how such a relationship is emotionally and cognitively coded in terms derived from the real world (here "romance") and how important a purely artificial relationship can become in an individual's life. It indicates how the relationship can involve the individual in

⁶² Charles Einstein, "From 'A Report to Felony Court,'" in Charles Einstein, ed., *The Fireside Book of Baseball* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956), 118-22.

many external activities (from attending sports events to talking to photographs), dominate interior experience (daydreaming, projections), and affect relations with friends, acquaintances, and family. Finally, it shows how a completely one-sided artificial relationship with a celebrity can program a person's actual encounter with him.

Should this case be dismissed as pathological? The "Report to Felony Court" asserts that A.'s relationship was "more than an ordinary teenage infatuation" and implies that it was abnormal from the start. Obviously the final outcome was unusual but the same cannot be said of the girl's behavior prior to the time she decided to murder her artificial lover. Up to that point, most of her activity does not seem to have been "abnormal" either statistically or in terms of social acceptability. To say this conclusively would require knowing more than we do about the incidence and the rules of artificial romance but it is suggested by three kinds of evidence. First, while her crush on Waitkus was irritating and disturbing to some members of her real social world, especially her father, it was considered entirely acceptable by others, such as her sister and girlfriend. Secondly, similar behavior has been occasionally documented. Hopkins quotes an Elvis Presley admirer as follows:

Since October 1955 so many of my experiences, dreams—not day dreams but sleep dreams—and memories involve Elvis that they'd fill a book. I've had no control over and have not attempted to control these experiences. I believe that there are powers and forces working to pull me towards Elvis. These forces are so strong that at this point in my life I couldn't pull away from Elvis if I desired to do so.

Another told Hopkins, "No one will ever understand how I feel. I love him! He has given me happiness and excitement in my life that will never die."⁶³ Thirdly, information I have collected on thirty-six similar artificial relationships suggests that all of the general types of behavior in which A. engaged during the first year of her attachment to Waitkus are common among normals. Twenty-three of these relationships involved females (ranging in age from thirteen to twenty-four); thirteen involved males (ranging in age from fourteen to forty-two). All had emotional attachments to opposite sex public celebrities they did not actually know, most commonly movie and TV actors and actresses (47%) and popular musicians (44%).

Like A., most of the individuals surveyed coded their relationship in romantic terms (they were "fixated on," "infatuated with," or "desperately in love with" the favored celebrity). Like A., they would go to concerts or

⁶³ Jerry Hopkins, "The Fans," in Harry Hubel, ed., *Things in the Driver's Seat* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1972), 165-66.

movies solely to see the favored celebrity and they collected all sorts of mementos. A.'s interest in seemingly insignificant aspects of Waitkus' life was also repeated in these cases. As one girl indicated:

I relished every little detail I could find out about T. [a popular musician]. If I read that he ate scrambled eggs and bacon for breakfast, I developed a sudden love for scrambled eggs—one food I had always hated. Details of his life became extremely important to me. I wanted to know when he woke up, when he went to bed, what color socks he wore, and if he liked french fries or mashed potatoes.

Active internal imaginary experiences were typical, and A.'s fantasy about meeting, dating, and marrying her artificial lover are standard:

At that time I imagined I could communicate with T. I had long conversations with him. I imagined meeting him and having him fall in love with me. Of course, he begged me to marry him and we lived happily ever after. . . . He had to go away for concerts but he was always true-blue and loyal to me, of course. . . . He always came home from trips and told me how much he missed me.

As with A., this kind of artificial relationship commonly intrudes into the person's real social world and influences her (or his) relations with friends, siblings, and parents. Finally, like A., several of the people tried to meet the favored celebrity. Daydreams about this were standard, and sometimes these developed into projections, as with a girl who halfway expected that one of the Beatles would "pick her out" at the Shea Stadium concert. Others took more initiative; one girl attended her favorite basketball player's public appearances so often that he now recognizes her and calls her by name. Recalling her adolescent crush, another girl said, "I'd still like to meet him, I'd be perfect for him."

Such evidence suggests that apart from its pathological conclusion, A.'s relationship with Waitkus was not abnormal. On the contrary, her behavior illustrates patterns which are characteristic of an important class of social relationships in modern America.

