

# Identity and Experience

Notes on Karina Smed's pre-defence

06.03.2009

Christian Jantzen

Dept. of Communication &  
Psychology

AAU

# Structure

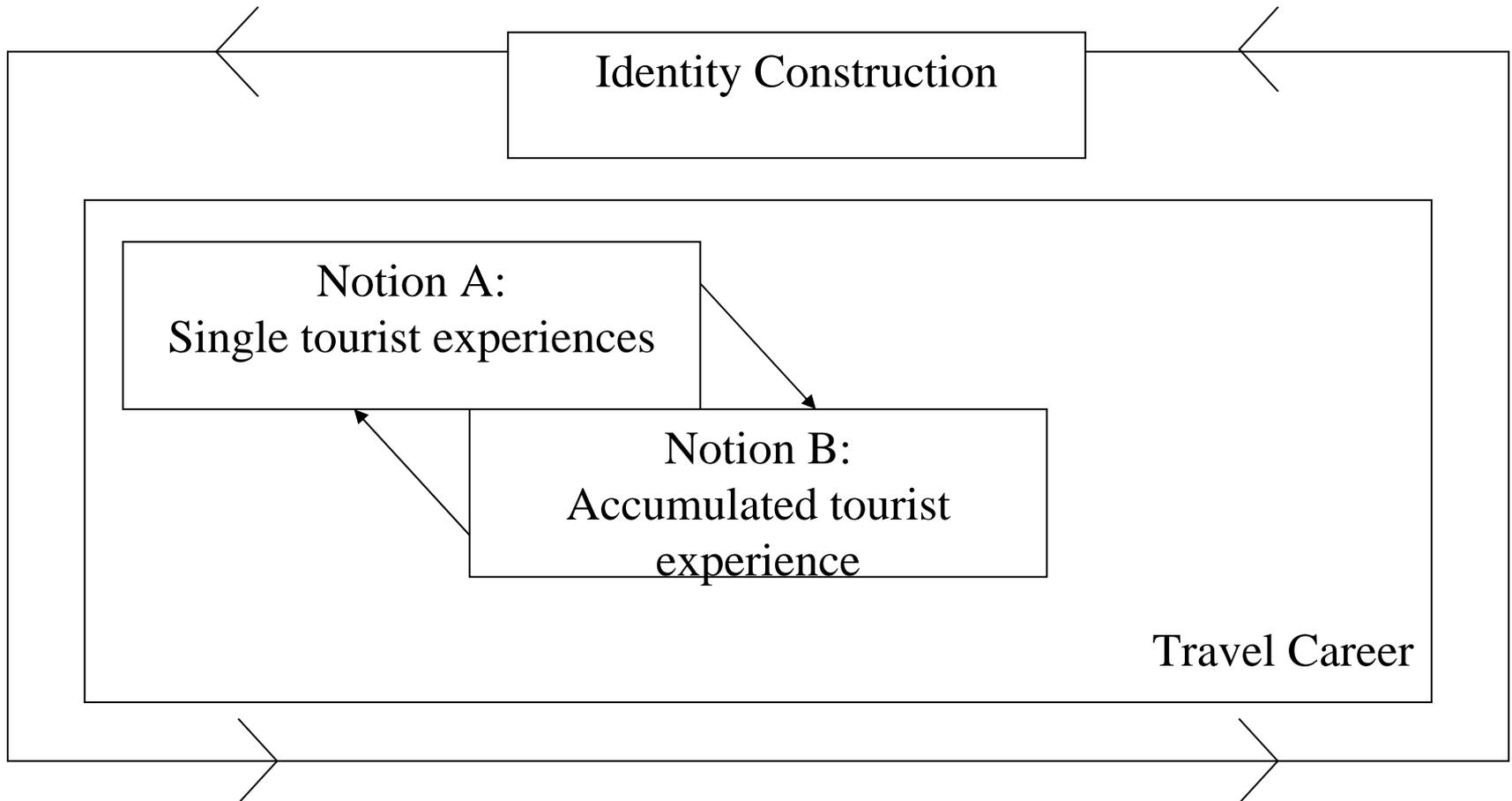
1. Identity and Experience
2. Self and Identity
3. Authenticity
4. Miscellaneous remarks
5. Some suggestions

# Experience (noun), Webster

1. The act or process of directly participating in events (sensations felt during participation) (“a horrid exp.”)
2. Direct observation of participating in events as a basis of new knowledge (revising perspectives, lessons learnt) (“having a religious experience”)
3. The conscious events that make up an individual life (self-knowledge) (“I know from experience”)
4. Practical knowledge, skill or practice derived from direct participation in events or particular activities (routines learnt) (“being an experienced person”)

# Identity and experience

The thesis' core model (Figure 1, p. 37)



# The status of this model

- A tool for establishing theoretical understanding of various concepts?
- A tool for analyzing the data? (e.g. Chapter 7.2, The Tourist Experience & figure 3 p. 71)
  - The transformation of A into B
    - The process of “accumulation”
  - The formation of expectations and its outcome
    - Disappointment
    - Surprise
  - The generation of (dynamic) memory
    - Narrating identity
    - Establishing “careers” > preferences

# A and B, or Aa, Ab, Bb and Ba?

1. Experiences: bodily *and* mental effects
2. Experiences: instantaneous or long-lasting (*Erlebnis* (A) vs. *Erfahrung* (B))
3. Experiences: “conscious”, reflexive (b) or “unconscious”, automatic (a)
  - Selves and identities

# The Experience Sequence

Aa - Ab - Bb - Ba (- Aa - ...)

- Aa: Neurological change (vitality)  
Emotional change (activation)
- Ab: Mental “disturbance” (shock, surprise, “Nirvana”)
- Bb: Mental reintegration (reflexivity, change of perspective) (“narrativity”)
- Ba: Change of habits (new preferences, taste, routines, expectations) (“careers”)

# What is a "good" experience?

Jantzen 2007, Jantzen & Vetner 2007a, 2007b

1. Touching sensory modalities, arousing
  - Neurological change
2. Emotionally satisfying
  - Activation change
3. Comprehensible yet challenging
  - Habitual change
4. Developing
  - Identity creating
5. Socially communicable
  - Meaning creating

The Reflexive level  
Bb

Habitus

The Habitual level  
Ab & Ba

Scheme/  
scripts

Activation  
change

The Evaluative level  
Aa

Emotion

Neurologi-  
cal change

The Physiological level  
Aa

Stimulation

The Social Structure

# Experience (noun), Webster

1. The act or process of directly participating in events ( $\approx$  **Aa**)
2. Direct observation of participating in events as a basis of new knowledge ( $\approx$  **Ab**)
3. The conscious events that make up an individual life ( $\approx$  **Bb**)
4. Practical knowledge, skill or practice derived from direct participation in events or particular activities ( $\approx$  **Ba**)

# Your research angle: Memories and “careers”

- Bb: Managing new information (the unexpected):
  - Interpretation: making meaning of immediate experiences
  - ... For/in your own life: identity work
- Bb into Ba: “Routinization”
  - Piaget: assimilation vs. accommodation
- Ba: Developing new habits & practices
  - Re-enacting your life
  - Transforming the unique into something quotidian (“the experience spiral”)
  - Developing or changing “career”

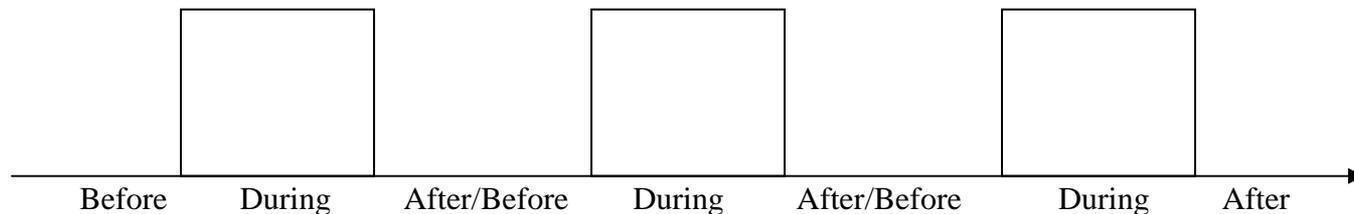
# Dynamics of remembering

Eysenck & Keane

1. Explicit memory (Bb)
  - Semantic memory
  - Autobiographical memory (30)
    - “Flashbulb” memory (43)
    - “Anecdotes” (the nature of most experiential narratives)
2. Implicit memory (Ba) (“unconscious”)
  - “Habitus”, practices (Bourdieu), automatism
  - Dynamics:
    - Accumulation of Bb (“broadening the horizon”)
    - And/or transforming Bb into Ba (tacitly/  
unconsciously changing the “career”)

# Implications of this elaboration

## Mosberg's model



- There is neither a “before” nor an “after” of experiences on level Aa, but only “during”: Aa is an endless sequence of moments passing by!!!
- There is never a “during” on level Bb; Bb is “after” but recollecting “before” (and perhaps some minute details of “during”?)
- There is never an “after” on level Ba; Ba is always “before” (anticipation) and may be challenged by “during” (acting in the moment)
- There is never a “before” at level Ab; Ab is (re-)acting on Aa “during” the experience (thus either terminating the particular Aa-moment or reframing it)

# Further implications

Your analytical themes: what is recollected?

- Adventure: Aa (bodily change)
  - Arousal
  - Boredom (1-UK, 76)
  - **Relaxation?** (Time out)
- Novelty: Ab (surprise)
  - Changing habits
  - Confirming familiarity
- Atmosphere: Bb (who I am and how I became that way)
  - **Nostalgia?** (8-UK, 80) - Transition
  - Repetition (2-DK, 80)
  - Re-definition (8-DK, 81)
  - Repair (9-UK, 82): what have I missed out on?
  - **“Purification”**: finding back to “authentic” self
- “Focus”: Ba (implicit anticipatory strategies)
  - Maximizing (quantity)
  - Optimizing (quality)

# Self and “career”

(your analytical model p. 71)

## 1. Self

- “Atmosphere”
  - Which experiences meant something important to me? (transition, repetition, redefinition)
  - What are my deeper longings? (purification, repair)

## 2. “Career”

- Focus: How do I go about getting relevant experiences (right now)?
- Adventure: What kind of sensations do I prefer (right now)?
- Novelty: How much do I want to change my life (right now)?

# Self and identity (29)

1. Self: A relatively stable assessment of who and what I am (meaning: not observable, but reportable)
  - Multiple selves, possible selves
  - Self-discrepancy - Higgins
  - “I am not quite myself today”
2. Identity: A relatively predictable pattern of classifying and behaving (observable but not fully reportable)
  - Continuity, Distinction, Agency, Self-efficacy (Breakwell)
  - Coherence in what I’m doing and/or saying
  - Consistency in what/whom I adhere to

# Authenticity

- (4.1.2) The reasons for tourism consumption (21)
  1. Existential misery of modernity (Cohen)
  2. A quest for objective authenticity (MacCannell)
  3. A quest for existential authenticity (Wang)
- Why not relate authenticity to
  - Identity: an urge to belong to “objective authenticity” or to be able to recognize it? (cf. Pine & Gilmore 2007)
  - Experiences: good experiences *are* existentially authentic?

# Miscellaneous remarks

1. “The writing metaphor” (Giddens) (p. 6):
  - Is “telling” not more apt (29)?
  - Narrating, the social dimension
2. The research questions (p.9):
  - “means”
  - “negotiation of meaning” (10)
3. What does “identity” viewed as “a social construction” (13, 24, **27**) imply?
4. Eriksson is not “more psychological” than Hogg & Abrams (24)
  - H&A: social psychology (Tajfel, Higgins)
  - E: developmental psychology (older version) (cf. Riesman)

# More remarks

1. p. 25: Interviewing is not only “a means to understand identity construction”
  - It also actively contributes *to constructing an understanding of identity*
2. **“Tourism as transition” (31)**
  - **Change? Liminality?**
3. Is the distinction “sacred/profane” apt, when tourism has become a necessity? (33)
4. **How is the “Other” present in the analysis? (33)**
5. Why is adventure so important (Elsrud)? (34, 41)
6. “The experience spiral”: is it inevitable? (45)
7. “Family Life Cycle”: different styles of being family (Douglas) (57)

# Some suggestions

1. A more profiled distinction between consumer research and business perspectives
2. More sources from consumer research (e.g. Belk's "extended self", p. 12, 19)
3. Condense the McCracken exposé (15 ff)
4. The discussion of tourism consumption: an elite or a tourist perspective (21)
5. Why not quote Turner directly? (33) and why not use his concept of the "liminoid" phase?