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Comment on Harrison C. White's/1. A Letter to Michael Schwartz, June 5, 2008

(doi: 10.2383/27726)

Sociologica (ISSN 1971-8853)

Fascicolo 2, settembre-ottobre 2008

Ente di afferenza:

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Comment on Harrison C. White's/1

A Letter to Michael Schwartz,
June 5, 2008

by Peter Carrington

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Dear Mike

As a former undergraduate in SocRel 10, I must protest, gently, your description of us as “bewhindered”, versus the “inspired” graduate students, in <http://www.sociologica.mulino.it/doi/10.2383/26577>.

Could this be an instance of projection?

My own reaction to Harrison's perspective, which was of course my first contact with sociology, was to accept it as conventional wisdom, neither more nor less bewildering than my intro courses in other subjects – perhaps less, actually, since what he said and you interpreted in your mimeo notes seemed sensible and unremarkable. It was only much later, in graduate school in sociology, that I learned that Harrison's approach was radical. I think perhaps you had to have some background in conventional sociology to be bewildered.

As to his “crazy” idea of using monographs not textbook(s) – as I recall, few of my instructors at Hvd used textbooks. (But SocRel 10 was the only SocRel course I took, I took mostly English, philosophy and math.) I tried to reproduce this non-text approach when I started teaching sociology, with disastrous results. Stone's *Crisis* is still one of my favourite reads. In fact, I think I got mainly two things out of that course – the assumption, which I never shook, that Harrison's perspective was the normal way to do sociology, and a love of history!

best,

Peter Carrington

Carrington, *Comment on Harrison C. White's*/1

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