

The reading modality of popular trauma talk from within the province of human practice: A phenomenological hermeneutic perspective

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners. I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

The term trauma occurs on a regular and frequent basis in Canadian newspapers. Contemporary inquiries into the phenomenon of the popularity of the term “trauma” have argued that trauma has become: a term that has drifted beyond its etymological root, a technical concept mistakenly and haphazardly applied, a symbol, and a functional communication tool. Problematically, each advance relies on a secondary approach to language. Specifically, each misses the inseparable connection between language and experience. Differently, the phenomenological hermeneutic approach taken in this dissertation moves beyond the notion of the ‘proper’, by deliberately considering the diversity of popular trauma talk as meaningful and intelligible for social members in the everyday practice of reading (de Certeau, 1984). This inquiry focuses on the modality of reading: that is, *how* social members actively *do* a popular trauma reading by modifying and making use of what is written when they establish a relation to what is read from within a particular Worldly existence. This work shows that when the modality of a popular trauma reading is considered in light of the generic and anonymous Worldly existence in which the reading occurs, the full scope of popular trauma talk is an open possibility for an everyday reading experience. This research demonstrates the benefits of adopting a phenomenological hermeneutic approach for understanding how people ‘consume’ cultural content.

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Introduction

Over the past four decades, the word ‘trauma’ has become increasingly present in Canadian popular discourse. The phenomenon is plainly evident in newspapers. A quick review of *Canadian Newsstand Major Dailies* bears this out. In 1977, the word appeared in 14 newspaper records. By 2013, that number grew to 4471.¹

Researchers in both mental health studies and cultural studies fields have commented on this phenomenon. Susannah Radstone (2007) refers to trauma as a “fascination” (p. 9) that is reflected in “a popular culture script” (p. 189). Dominick La Capra (2013: xxx) refers to increased use as an “obsession”. Karyn Ball (2000) suggests that the popularization of trauma has reached a level of fetishism (p. 1). Wulf Kansteiner (2004) remarks that the increased popularity of trauma is a particular “sign of our times,” calling it a widespread “cultural metaphor” (p. 194).

Social science researchers, too, have noted the increased popularity of the term. Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman (2004) argue that trauma is an important aspect of the “moral economy” in a society because the use of the term serves to publicly identify “legitimate victims” of trauma (p. 279-284). They suggest that the use of the word helps to demarcate collective notions of good and evil. Indeed, they argue that the widespread use of the term signals a collective agreement about notions of victimhood. In their view, the word trauma is prevalent in contemporary mainstream talk because it is a mechanism through which people express “a range of concerns, values and expectations” about “the violence of the world” (p. 277). As they put it:

¹ This acknowledgement of presence does not take into account changes in the total number of newspapers over this period of time. The interest in this brute data is to note that there is a presence of trauma talk in Canadian newspapers.

...the truth of trauma lies not in the psyche, the mind, or the brain, but in the moral economy of contemporary societies. The fact that trauma has become so pervasive a factor in our world is not the result of the successful dissemination of a concept elaborated in the scientific world of psychiatrists, and then exported into the social space of afflictions. It is rather the product of a new relationship to time and memory, to mourning and obligations, to misfortune and the misfortunate. The psychological concept, trauma, has enabled us to give a name to this relationship. (Fassin & Rechtman, 2004, p. 276)

While social scientists such as Fassin and Rechtman focus on trauma as a word that performs a communication function, other experts (e.g. Fowler's, 2008) argue that growth in the use of the term is the result of misguided usage. For example, Richard J. McNally (2005) describes the imprecise conceptualization of the term as currently employed by experts in the area of clinical mental health practice. Radstone (2007) makes a similar claim in the field of cultural studies and humanities. In both fields, then, there are experts who claim that popular use of the term trauma is problematic. Clearly, there is a lack of fit between how the term trauma is used in everyday talk and how scholarly and clinical experts understand the term. In the balance of this dissertation I examine the nature and significance of this disjuncture.

[Interpretive Sociology Framework and Phenomenological Hermeneutics](#)

The theoretical and methodological approach I use is rooted in what is broadly referred to in the literature as interpretive sociology. According to Hale, interpretive sociology "begins from the recognition that people 'interpret' and make sense of their social world and experience their actions as meaningful" (1995, p. 26). Indeed, the premise of interpretive sociology is supported by the phenomenological hermeneutic approach I employ in the following analysis.

I use phenomenological hermeneutics to understand how people “consume” (de Certeau, 1984) the term trauma in everyday communications (“popular trauma talk”). I do so in order to understand the possibility of the everyday practice of a popular trauma talk reading experience while within in newspaper-reader relation. Consequently, popular trauma talk is not an empirical designation but is, rather, an analytic focus.

The analysis of contemporary inquiries into the popularity of trauma talk reveals a disjuncture between the full scope of popular trauma talk and a variety of other expert uses of (and discourses around) the term trauma. To give just one brief illustration that I pursue below in great detail: there are mental health practitioners who argue that it is possible to identify particular behaviours as objective evidence that provide for a rational trauma formulation. They argue that they can recognize symptoms of a trauma experience and help trauma sufferers through analysis, counselling and other measures. The point of my dissertation is not to deny the utility of such expert interpretations and uses of the term². It is, rather, to use phenomenological hermeneutics to collect how social members use the term trauma in a wide variety of ways that differs from expert discourse and unproblematically makes sense to them, regardless of whether or not such uses would be seen by experts as proper uses of the term.

In Chapter 4 I outline the details of the specific variety of phenomenological hermeneutics I use. At this point it is sufficient to say that this theory and method seeks to gain practical access to the possibilities for unproblematic understanding from within the context of the province of human practice. It seeks to make the taken-for-granted intelligibility of everyday practices, like doing a popular trauma talk reading, unintelligible in order to recover the grounds for the open possibility of trauma talk occurrences in newspapers from within a particular Worldly existence.

² For instance, psychoanalysis has its own established legitimate therapeutic area in relation to trauma. This work does not discredit this legitimacy. The focus in this work is on the everyday use of the term, which is outside of the area of psychoanalysis.

Key to phenomenological hermeneutics is the belief that “a person’s understanding of a text or an artifact as a whole is established by referring to their [own] history and cultural background” (Hoiseth & Keitsch, 2015, p. 35). According to this perspective, “[t]he interpretation of an artifact has to be explored within its cultural, historical, and in situ context” (p. 34). This means that the phenomenological hermeneutic inquirer aims to recover the meaning of existing in the lifeworld that is concealed in the situational use of the text for practical purposes.

Phenomenological hermeneutics seeks to get close to taken-for-granted living, like the modality of a popular trauma reading, in order to develop a horizon for understanding. In developing such a horizon, phenomenological hermeneutics attempts to recover the foundations of social life that ground taken-for-granted understanding. It is a method and theory that enables the inquirer to bring out of concealment, the form of living that grounds the possibility for the intelligibility of the full scope of popular trauma talk in mainstream cultural content. It is a position that enables this inquiry to work through how the intelligibility of popular trauma talk is a possibility from within a particular Worldly existence within which the popular trauma talk reading happens.

In the analysis to follow – and specifically in Chapter Four – I employ a specialized technical language which is part of the phenomenological hermeneutic approach. I would like to introduce at least some of these terms here so the purpose and style of the analysis is made clear. For these reasons, below I introduce the terms: understanding, experience, Worldly existence, language, horizon, and finitude of understanding.

Understanding is “an on-going effort basic to our being in this world” (McManus Holroyd, 2007, p. 2). It is not a mental state or private affair but is instead a way of being, a way of acting in the world from within a particular Worldly existence (Grondin, 2003). Accordingly, the phenomenological hermeneutic approach provides a basis for recognizing that social members make sense of popular

trauma talk via an interpretive process as they are situated in a particular form of living. As McManus Holroyd (2007) states, phenomenological hermeneutic research seeks to “clarify the conditions that can lead to understanding” (p. 1).

Phenomenological hermeneutics relies on the phenomenological principle that communication is meaningful intersubjectively because communication is inherently social. Meaningful communication relies on common (or familiar, Worldly) understandings, as opposed to common word definitions. Familiarity with Worldliness is “expressed through the way of living, through actions, through narratives” and as such the essential nature of the lifeworld is brought out of concealment via the interpretation of text when using a phenomenological hermeneutic approach (Lindseth and Norberg, 2004, p. 147). Understanding communication, then, requires that a social being interpret their Worldly encounters by establishing a relatedness to a familiar social world in order to meaning making to occur. To this point Lindseth and Norberg (2004) state that:

This original experience is a basic relatedness to the world. It is not a special kind of lived experience, but rather the foundation of all lived experiences, the prerequisite that lived experience reveals a world, that it has a meaning content. Human consciousness is *intentional*... It is always about the world, an openness to the world (and of the world). Human existence is *being-in-the-world*, as Heidegger states. And this world, as it reveals itself to our consciousness...[is] different from the objective, outer world. (p. 147, italics in the original)

When relying on a phenomenological hermeneutic approach, the everyday practice of reading is recognizable as a way of acting in the world. It is a modality of activity that involves doing interpretive work from a particular Worldly existence. “Existence” refers to the openness to particular possibilities for understanding (and therefore for experiencing the world) while also excluding other possibilities (those beyond one’s limits). As Hoiseth and Keithsch (2015, p. 35) state, the world social beings are

immersed in is a useful one. It is practical for everyday purposes of living. The particular form of living, from within which the popular trauma talk reading experience for practical purposes takes place, provides the grounds for the meaningfulness of this talk. It provides for the possibility of the full scope of trauma talk occurring in Canadian newspapers in the course of the lived experience of reading from within a newspaper-reader relation. As Laverty (2003) notes, phenomenological hermeneutic work demands that inquirers recognize language as crucial to social living as social beings who exist in a world. Consequently, to say that one exists Worldly, in phenomenological hermeneutic terms, is to uphold an inherent principle that for social beings “the world is inseparable from being-in-the-world” (Hoiseth and Keithsch, 2015, p. 35). “In particular, the world and consciousness are joined together through language” (Bonner, 2013, p. 23). Holding this principle in the course of doing phenomenological hermeneutic work demands that the inquire recognize that

the world is not impersonal; it is something that exists between individuals. The world and our existence in the world is what creates a shared understanding between individuals, and the medium that makes this understanding of the world possible is language. Language is where the world resides, and...it is language that discloses the world in which we live. (McManus Holroyd, 2007, p. 5)

Phenomenological hermeneutics is primarily concerned with understanding the inseparable connection between language and being in the course of confrontations with the world as they are lived. “Language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs. Understanding occurs in interpreting” (Gadamer, 1989, p. 389). Core to this belief is a recognition that in and through language social beings establish understanding of the Worldly situations they confront. Understanding, however, is not infinite. Possibilities that exist for understanding one’s Worldly encounters are limited by the finitude of understanding from within which the Worldly interpretation manifests for, and is disclosed by, the interpreter. “The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a

particular vantage point” (Gadamer, 1989, p. 302). The horizon through which meaning is available as a possibility is rooted in one’s historicity, their situational facticity and their future projections while in a relational context. In our case, the relational context is the newspaper-reader relation from within which the Worldly popular trauma talk reading experience happens. Given these foundational assertions, phenomenological hermeneutics contends that language is inseparable from one’s being-in-the-world. Language is inseparable from how one exists in the world in the course of making sense of their Worldly encounters. McManus Holroyd (2007, p. 5) confirms this claim when stating that “language opens access to meaning, and is the condition on which the human world is disclosed.” Overall, then, phenomenological hermeneutic social inquiries deliberately seek to understand the possibilities for understanding (ways of being-in-the-world) in a particular relational context as these possibilities manifest and are disclosed in and through language.

As McManus Holroyd (2007) notes, the phenomenological hermeneutic approach does not take the position of “devaluing of the scientific method in human science research” (p. 10). Rather, it contends “that the scientific method alone cannot explain human experience or, more importantly, precipitate an understanding of it” (p. 10). Phenomenological hermeneutics seeks to understand the foundations of social life by doing textual interpretation to understand what common communication tells us “about being-in-the-world, about life world. This is not a factual world outside or lying behind the text, but rather a world in front of the text, a world revealed by the text. Through lived discourses we participate in this world – and through narratives we become aware of this participation” (Lindseth and Norberg, 2004, p. 148).

Other schools of thought within the interpretive sociological umbrella also seek to understand the foundations of social living through textual interpretation. Such traditions include: social constructionism, ethnomethodology, Foucauldian, and hermeneutic phenomenology. Below is an outline of why these orientations would be useful for sociological analyses of popular trauma talk yet

are inappropriate for the purposes of this work given the particular primary interest animating the research project at-hand. Of course, these traditions intersect with the phenomenological hermeneutic approach taken here and will be referenced throughout the study, even as they do not provide for the particular direction of this study.

A social constructionist approach (Smith, 1990; McKendy, 1992) could be used to analyze how realities of trauma talk are produced in the process of document construction. Such work could involve an analysis of the socio-cultural powers including the inclusion and exclusion of particular viewpoints, expertise and bureaucracies invoked in the construction of popular trauma talk in Canadian newspapers. Although a perfectly reasonable project for sociological inquiry, work processes and the politics of interpretation in reality construction practices do not provide for an understanding of how the full scope of popular trauma talk is an open possibility for the everyday member in a newspaper-reader relation. Such an approach would not get us into a position to collect the grounds for the intelligibility of this talk for social members in the course of the everyday practice of reading.

Further, ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967) would be a useful approach for studying the taken for granted processes and rules people invoke when making sense in everyday settings. This approach would be useful for collecting the background understandings relied on when making sense of popular trauma talk occurrences in the course of mundane living. Such an approach would be useful for making the self-evident nature of popular trauma talk intelligible and for understanding how people work out their common sense understandings of such talk. However, ethnomethodology does not go far enough for the purposes of this research because it does not foster an examination of these assumptions on the basis of one's worldly existence. Nor does ethnomethodology demand a consideration of the finitude of understanding of the inquirer (Bonner, 2001, p. 269-27). While ethnomethodology leads an inquirer to consider the importance of the taken for granted in an everyday practice, it does not have a deep focus on the relational context and the connection between being-in-the-world and language (Bonner,

2001). It is the case that this research demands a different focus than what is available via an ethnomethodology focus, though this work will draw on, as does De Certeau, phenomenology and ethnomethodology as relevant. The research at-hand demands an approach that can collect the open possibilities that exist within a newspaper-reader relation while being-in-the-world within a particular form of living.

Initially Foucault's theorizing (1977), in *Discipline and punishment: The birth of the prison*, seems useful for social inquiry into the disjuncture between specialist and everyday discourse. However, a focus on disciplinary power and surveillance is distinctly different from that which is required given the research interest herein. Foucauldian theorizing privileges social apparatuses exercising power on social actors and the subsequent organizing force expert discourses have over social actors. According to this theorizing, social actors lose their determining force given that the social actor self-disciplines their understanding in order to align with the demands specialist discourse (de Certeau, 1984, p. 48-49). In this way social actors are argued to provide surveillance over and against themselves (de Certeau, 1984, p. 48-49). Relying on the work of de Certeau (1984) we understand the social member in the newspaper-reader relation as an active actor who subverts the power of the 'proper' demanded by specialist knowledges. Through their creative work in the interpretive process of establishing a relation, everyday readers make popular trauma talk meaningful by way of a multitude of open possibilities that exist given the nature of the modality of reading popular trauma talk.

It is worthwhile to note that a hermeneutic phenomenological approach (van Manen, 1990) is also insufficient for addressing the research focus of this inquiry. This is the case since the primary intention of this work is not to develop a rich and detailed description of the lived experience of doing a popular trauma talk reading. Specifically van Manen states, "hermeneutic phenomenology is... to construct a full interpretive description of some aspect of the lifeworld" (1990, p. 18). Instead the demand of this work, given the gap within the literature and the empirical reality of the widespread

presence of such talk in mainstream Canadian discourse, is to understand how everyday members are able to make sense of the full scope of this talk in their Worldly existence while within a newspaper-reader relation. Consequently the primary focus of this work is hermeneutic not phenomenological. Given the research interest herein phenomenological principles modify the hermeneutic orientation employed as opposed to hermeneutics modifying a foundational phenomenological orientation (van Manen, 1990). This is not a subtle difference. It is a substantial theoretical and methodological difference.

As people go about their routine daily lives they do so using common shared assumptions about roles, norms, expected behaviours etc. They do so in a joint project of meaning making with other people who live in and interact within the same shared natural and social space. Core to this contention is meaning making occurring in a way that involves a taken-for-granted approach to living. Taken-for-grantedness is unproblematized meaning making for the purpose of practical living. It is characteristic of living within the everyday lifeworld. The everyday lifeworld is the “province of reality in which we encounter directly, as the condition of our life, natural and social givens as pre-given realities with which we must try to cope” (Schutz & Luckman, 1989, p. 1). It is where social members “experience life essentially as the province of human practice” (p. 1). Features of the everyday lifeworld sustain the plausible intelligibility of popular trauma talk for social members in the course of the everyday practice of reading. These features resource the possibility for social members to unproblematically grasp the full range of trauma talk in popular discourse in a concealed way.

In the analysis to follow, and especially in Chapter Four, I employ a specialized, technical language which is part of the phenomenological hermeneutic approach. The theoretical and methodological approach I use combines elements of classical phenomenological hermeneutics as represented by the work of scholars such as Heidegger, Gadamer, Schutz and Palmer as activated by Stanley Deetz and Kieran Bonner. The theorizing of cultural studies scholar, de Certeau is relied on for

the purposes of understanding reading as a creative everyday practice that happens in the course of mundane social living.

The Province of Human Practice and the Everyday Practice of Reading

In the detailed analysis below, I supplement the phenomenological hermeneutics approach with the theorizing of de Certeau (1984). de Certeau is particularly useful for understanding the everyday practice of *doing* a popular trauma reading. The full scope of popular trauma talk is taken seriously in this inquiry. The fullness of these occurrences in contemporary mainstream discourse are taken as a possibility for an unproblematized reading experience within the province of human practice. This inquiry seeks to recover the intelligibility of popular trauma talk from the position of social members in a particular modality of reading that is rooted in the province of human practice. Said differently, this inquiry focuses on the particular reading modality happening in the course of making sense of popular trauma talk as it is consumed from the lifeworld of a social member doing the everyday practice of a popular trauma reading in the course of living. This work offers a deliberate analysis of how social members engage popular trauma talk when *doing* the everyday practice of reading in the particular Worldly existence from within which the reading happens.

As outlined by Michel de Certeau, who draws on the work of ethnomethodology and social constructionism (1984, p. xvi), ‘everyday practices’ are the unannounced “‘ways of operating’ or of doing things” undertaken by social members in their course of everyday living (p. xi). Commonly ignored as “merely the obscure background of social activity” (p. xi), these practices are not reducible to an individual. They are meaningful ways of doing things (such as doing a popular trauma talk reading) whereby a relation is established in an interpretive process given one’s situated Worldly existence. As illustrated by the wide scope of popular trauma talk present in Canadian newspapers, this relation is of multiple and varied combinations. de Certeau states that:

[t]he examination of such practices does not imply a return to individuality. ... Analysis shows that a relation (always social) determines its terms, and not the reverse, and that each individual is a locus in which an incoherent (and often contradictory) plurality of such relational determinations interact. Moreover, the question at hand concerns modes of operation or schemata of action, and not directly the subjects (or persons) who are their authors or vehicles. (1984, p. xi)

Since everyday practices are social actions that are typically unnoticed and are foundational to the doing of taken-for-granted living for practical purposes, the research interest here is in how these practices *happen*. Specifically stated, my interest is in *how* the particular modality of a popular trauma talk reading, in a newspaper-reader relation, provides for the open possibility of the full scope of trauma talk usages occurring in Canadian newspapers. To our case directly, popular trauma discourse, such as that found in newspapers, is 'consumed' by readers who do not construct the written content. Although they are not the creators of the original content they are themselves the authors of its production. They are the authors of its practical use (De Certeau, 1984). The practical use is meaning making within the Worldly existence from within which the newspaper-reader relation happens.

In the course of doing an everyday practice of reading, social members "poach" (De Certeau, 1984, p. xii) from the popular content. They modify the original text in a silent and nearly invisible interpretive process of active 'consumption' (p. xii-xiii). When consuming, readers establish a relational context in the interpretive process of sense making. By establishing a relation to what is written in the course of reading, a popular trauma reading is made intersubjectively and subjectively meaningful since "things show themselves in their relatedness" (Deetz, 1973, p. 47).

As will be shown in this work, establishing a relation to what is read happens in and through an interpretive process. This process is directed by a particular orientation to the world that stems from the particular Worldly existence from within which the modality of reading occurs. The modification

occurring in this process involves the reader poaching the newspaper content in such a way that possibilities for experiencing the trauma formulation in the course of reading, from within a particular form of living, are consciously constituted and reconstituted. 'Consciously' here speaks specifically to interpretively *establishing* a relation to what is written in the course of doing a reading. Establishing a relation is a pre-reflexive happening. It "is not a mental psychological construct but rather the very direction, intention, or mode of doing in the world" (Deetz, 1973, p. 43). Since the modality of reading from within a particular orientation requires doing modifications to what is written in order to establish a relational context for sense making, the everyday practice of reading is necessarily a primary language experience. It is an interpretive process whereby both the manifestation and disclosure of possibilities for living in the course of reading appear from within a particular kind of being-in-the-world.

Central to this inquiry is, then, the belief that meaning making in the course of reading is active, albeit in a taken-for-granted way. It is *doing* something. De Certeau poetically characterizes the everyday practice of modification when stating:

[t]his mutation makes the text habitable, like a rented apartment. It transforms another person's property into a space borrowed for a moment by a transient. Renters make comparable changes in an apartment they furnish with their acts and memories; as do speakers, in the language into which they insert both the messages of their native tongue and, through their accent, through their own "turns of phrase," etc., their own history... In the same way the users of social codes turn them into metaphors and ellipses of their own quests. The ruling order serves as a support for innumerable productive activities, while at the same time blinding its proprietors to this creativity (like those "bosses" who simply *can't* see what is being created within their own enterprises). (1984, p. xxi-xxii, italics in the original)

This inquiry will show that when doing modifications to what is written, everyday readers poach from what is not their own creation. They alter its contents making into something new. These

modifications to what is written happen only insofar as the openness to possibilities for practical living in the course of reading provide. As stipulated by De Certeau, social inquiry into this kind of project requires making:

...explicit the systems of operational combination...which also compose a “culture,” and to bring to light the models of action characteristic of users whose status as the dominated element in society (a status that does not mean that they are either passive or docile) is concealed by the euphemistic term “consumer”. Everyday life invents itself as *poaching* in countless ways on the property of others. (De Certeau, 1984, p. xi-xii, italics in the original)

Specifically at question for this inquiry is, then, what are the particular models of action characteristic of social members doing a popular trauma talk reading from within the province of human practice? Further, what kind of Worldly orientation supports the particular “modes of operation or schemata of action” (De Certeau, 1984, p. xi) providing for the openness necessary for the full scope of popular trauma talk to be read as intelligible without contemplation or brokenness?

De Certeau explains that models of action for a doing the everyday practice of reading requires the use of practical tactics that are pre-reflexively (or prior to contemplation or abstraction) known to social members. They require a taken-for-granted reliance on a social wisdom about how to do a popular trauma talk reading. Embedded within this way to do such a reading is a particular kind of orientation that directs sense making according to the situational Worldly existence from within which the reading takes place. Reading as an everyday practice, therefore, demands both: (a) a reliance on stock knowledges, and (b) a grounding in a particular Worldly existence in order for the full scope of trauma talk present in popular content (like newspapers) to be unproblematically available in a primary language experience. By ‘orientation’ this work is speaking of the “specific ways in which an individual looks at the world” (van Manen, 1977, p. 211).

The concept of orientation also refers to the way in which individual actors define their “action-world” (Parsons, 1949); it refers to the “general schemes” in terms of which the individual defines his situation” (Thomas, 1951); and, in ordinary language, it includes the notions of point of view, perspective, a person’s way of looking at things, outlook, standpoint, and so on.

Underlying every orientation is a definite epistemology, axiology, and ontology; i.e., a person’s orientation is composed of what he believes to be true, to be valuable, and to be real....Moving from one orientation to another is usually experienced as a transition between two worlds - as a shift from one reality to another. (van Manen, 1977, p. 211-212)

As a whole this inquiry is framed by the theorizing of de Certeau and phenomenological hermeneutics. The theorizing of de Certeau is used to develop an understanding of the reading modality of popular trauma talk as it happens in the course of the everyday practice of its consumption. Phenomenological hermeneutics is relied on for its ability to recover the particular kind of openness to possibilities for a primary language experience available to social members when doing a popular trauma reading within the province of human practice. As will be seen in Chapters 4 and 5, core to this openness, is a playfulness that is unavailable within a discourse of expertise horizon of understanding. By applying this approach to popular trauma talk directly I will demonstrate that by modifying popular trauma formulations in the course of relating to a reading, everyday members actively subvert a dogmatic notion of a ‘proper’ form of ‘trauma’ or of a trauma formulation in mainstream discourse. And, that by modifying in the course of doing a reading, social members consume mainstream trauma talk actively not passively.

Reading is *doing* something. In the case of ‘doing’ the everyday practice of a popular trauma talk reading, consumption happens via an interpretive process. During this pre-reflexive *happening* what is read is modified in order for sense to be made for the practical purposes of living in the course of reading. Rendering a popular trauma talk occurrence intelligible involves making sense of what is

read by relying on: (1) stock knowledges; and (2) a particular orientation to the text made possible by particular form Worldly existence, a particular form of being-in-the-world, from within which the doing of the reading happens.

Current Inquiries into the Popularity of 'Trauma' and Trauma Talk

Current research and inquiry into the prevalence of trauma talk consistently ignores the breadth of use of the term in everyday life. Collectively, expert discourse to date has missed attending to the significance of the varied ways that members of the population use the term much differently than do contemporary trauma specialists. There exists a significant divide, therefore, between trauma specialists and everyday members as to the openness of possibilities for an unproblematic trauma reading experience in contemporary society. To date the arguments of experts directed towards the 'other' repeatedly sidestep or deny the way that social members render popular trauma discourse intelligible. De Certeau tells us that reading is an interpretive meaning making activity. It is an active, yet taken-for-granted happening that occurs within the course of everyday living. However, researchers and theorists grounded in a trauma discourse of expertise horizon commonly view popular trauma talk as examples of misapplied expert conceptual schemes. For such scholars, the use of the term trauma has a specific structural form and/or technical meaning.

My claim in this dissertation is that such expert discourse misses the full significance of everyday use of the term by social members. Although expert discourse typically produces a reading of popular trauma talk as misguided understanding or as a demonstration of a broken 'proper' concept, everyday members *do* typically consume and author its use as a possibility for a reading experience. Everyday members typically read popular trauma talk as intelligible talk from within the province of human practice and do so typically without a need for contemplation. They are able to, and do, relate to the full scope of trauma talk. Different from the trauma specialist who draws on a technical expert

definition of the term, the everyday member doing a popular trauma talk newspaper reading draws on pre-existing foundations of social life. They are resourced by features available to them in the everyday lifeworld. Further still, they are oriented in the course of *doing* a popular trauma talk reading by their situatedness in a newspaper-reader relation. Consequently, when in the course of doing a popular trauma talk newspaper reading, everyday members are not directed by a discourse of expertise orientation. The trauma specialist horizon does not contain the finitude of understanding necessary for the open possibility of the full scope of newspaper trauma talk occurring in Canadian newspapers.

Mainstream trauma talk, such as that found in daily newspapers, carries with it an expectation that members of the public will routinely relate to its use unproblematically. That is, when a popular trauma use is read in the course of the everyday practice of newspaper reading, social members will understand its use without a need for contemplation. By contrast, when experts use the term 'trauma' or engage popular 'trauma talk', they make an abstraction from the way that the population at large uses it within everyday practices of reading from within the province of human practice. Categories and conceptual boundaries defined by professional elites as being proper to their disciplines pull away from how what is written in popular trauma talk is consumed. Such professional interpretations exclude or dismiss the practical use of the wealth of possibilities everyday members have for understanding popular trauma talk occurrences when doing a reading of such talk. These interpretations miss understanding what is relied upon in order to do a popular trauma reading pre-reflexively, resourced by everyday living practices. In this way, popular trauma talk exists only as a misapplication or misuse of a correct expert technical form. As De Certeau (1984) points out, while modern popular discourse (such as television and the media) is "where the production of the Other – of "culture" – appears" (p. 170), "the story of man's travels through his own texts remains in large measure unknown" (p. 171). That is, while the popularity of trauma talk is a phenomenon acknowledged by inquirers, the everyday practice of unproblematically *doing* a popular trauma talk reading remains largely unknown.

Expert discourse routinely discredits everyday uses of the term as improper. In so doing it is unable to realize the meaningfulness of the breadth of trauma talk for social members in a newspaper-reader relation. The narrowing down of the full range of ways people consume the term has three particular consequences:

- (1) They assert a perpetual reinforcement of the limits of their specialized knowledge as the possibility for 'appropriate' interpretations of trauma. For instance, as will be highlighted in this work, clinical mental health trauma specialists, like McNally (2005), understand trauma to be an emotional wound that stems from an intolerable emotional event of sufficient catastrophe to alter typical mental and physical functioning. Impacts of such events are measurably traumatizing through the use of professional assessment criteria. In this way the actuality of a trauma occurrence is diagnosable by the sufficiently trained and professional disciplined clinical mental health specialist who follows strict adherence to objective, evidence-based, assessment criteria. Accordingly, proper trauma formulations are those that are produced through the clinical assessments made by such experts. Experts trained as clinical mental health practitioners, who follow guiding diagnostic standards of practice, are those capable of determining the reality of a trauma occurrence and of producing a proper trauma formulation. In this view, popular uses of the term trauma are but an illustration of the misapplication of a technical term. My point in this work is not to claim that the clinical medical approach, or any other framework/theorizing within the discourse of expertise, is wrong. My point is, rather, that expert discourse looks in the wrong place when seeking to understand the prevalence of trauma usages in popular discourse. Trauma experts, as will be shown, fail to adequately consider the foundations of social life. I argue, that to claim that the term 'trauma' has only one clinical-medical-theoretical meaning which has been and should continue to be the only

academically/clinically acceptable meaning is to unduly restrict the 'legitimate' or 'proper' use of the word. Such an advance supports the power of the proper established by abstraction. Different from this closure of possibilities for seeing intelligibly, the phenomenological hermeneutic framework applied in this social inquiry stresses the role of the lifeworld and the importance of a relational context that is grounded in a particular way of being-in-the-world when doing a popular trauma reading.

- (2) They mistakenly understand language as separable from experience by focusing on secondary rather than a primary approach to language. Contemporary inquiries into the popularity of the term trauma claim language as something reducible to "precise expression" (Deetz, 1973, p. 40) by understanding words (like 'trauma') as the representation of some original thing. Words, through such a derivative view of language, are considered to be functional tools that "refer to things", "call up concepts" or "symbol[ize]" (p. 40) thereby making language a tool for communicating through a process of objectification. Differently, a primary approach to language requires understanding language as inseparable from experience. It requires understanding that "language is not simply a tool used to share experience but is intrinsic to and involved in developing possibilities for experience" (Deetz, 1973, p. 41). And that, "[p]rimary language experience shows itself only in operation" (p. 42) because "the interpretive activities, the underlying modalities of consciousness, are hidden in the making present of possibilities for action" (p. 42). That is, the intelligibility of trauma, the sense making of a popular trauma formulation by establishing a relation, means that the very possibility for a trauma reading experience within one's situational existence manifests and is disclosed in what is written as it is read from within one's situational existence. Through these unnoticed everyday interpretive activities the primary language experience is constituted when a trauma usage is rendered

intelligible by an active reader. The popular trauma talk interpretation, and thus understanding, is experienced as an open possibility for living, in the course of reading, since in and through language “[t]hings are understood directly in terms of possibilities for acting in the World” (p. 43).

- (3) They block the potential for a negative dialectical experience with their finitude of understanding because of a consistent disinterest in, and routine discrediting of, the full scope of trauma talk occurring in everyday discourse. Trauma specialist discourse prevents the realization of the limits of its own finitude of understanding the meaningfulness of popular trauma talk as it is consumed by everyday readers. It does so because it blocks the ability to be open to the possibility of something other than what is already understood within the specialist frame of reference. Through this indifference to recognizing the limits of the discourse of expertise horizon of understanding results in an overlooking or premature dismissal, in particular to this case, of the foundations of social life upon which varied trauma talk has use.

Doing a Popular Trauma Reading: A Primary Language Experience

In contrast, the interpretive framework I adopt in this research views people as naturally able to make sense of their social world and the myriad interactions they have within it. Members of the social group have a variety of resources for interpreting the significance of the situations they confront. Social beings typically engage with their world by means of a pre-reflexive, unannounced taken-for-granted, interpretive process. They make their situation intelligible to themselves by means of a dialectical engagement (Bonner, 1997) by interpretively establishing a relational context whereby subjective and intersubjective sense is made. In fact, social beings inhabit multiple complex realities that are simultaneously connected to differing spheres of life. They consume mainstream trauma talk by doing a

reading (using a particular reading modality) that involves modifying the content within a particular orientation thereby making the full range of popular trauma talk intelligible in the fullness of an everyday relational context. This relational context, however, cannot be made visible through the professional's technique of abstract categorization, since such abstraction seeks to confirm an adherence to a fixed theoretical structure. It holds onto a particular definition of the term 'trauma' specific to a particular theoretical perspective. Such processes of categorization, for example, require trauma experts to measure the degree to which pre-determined classifications can be observed in an event potentially classifiable as traumatic.

Assessing the degree of adherence to a pre-determined standard is starkly different from working through the relational context relied on by the social member who is understanding from within a particular kind of being-in-the-world. The interpretive framework adopted in this research therefore focusses on the possibility of an intelligible interpretation of trauma formulations from the point of view of an everyday member as popular reader having a popular trauma reading experience. Distinctly not of interest is a search for a 'proper' form of trauma talk. Nor is this work animated by a need to determine the degree to which trauma talk can be measured and observed as adhering to a predefined disciplinary standard. Speaking to the dearth of inquiry into the active process involved in the modality of reading, De Certeau (1984) states:

Unfortunately, the many works on reading provide only partial clarification on this point or depend on the experiences of literary people. Research has been concerned with the teaching of reading. ... Investigations of ordinary reading are more common in sociology, but generally statistical in type: they are more concerned with calculating the correlations between objects read, social groups, and places frequented more than with analyzing the very operation of reading, its modalities and its typology. (p. 170)

The interpretive framework contends that multiple realities provide for different understandings of the social world. One's understanding of the reality of their existence is derived from establishing a relational context that provides for intelligibility. An established relational context is then not available as an outlier to be stripped away as misapplication. In this dissertation I argue that adopting such an interpretive framework allows this inquiry to recognize how the full scope of popular trauma talk is available to the everyday reading social member as a possibility in their particular reading orientation. This work provides a basis for taking seriously popular trauma talk occurrences in mainstream discourse that are readily available to everyday members yet are beyond the limits of the discourse of expertise horizon of understanding of such occurrences. An interpretive orientation provides the possibility for developing an understanding of how popular trauma talk, in its varied usages, is straightforwardly understood among social members in the course of practical mundane living in a relational context. Such a framework is open to the breadth and scope of popular trauma talk as a primary language experience. It can help research and inquiry into the popularity of trauma talk recognize the relevance of relational contexts available to everyday readers when making sense of the full scope of popular trauma talk from within a particular Worldly existence. In doing so this inquiry strengthens our sociological understanding of how social members make sense of themselves, their relation to others and the world in which they are immersed.

Significance and Contribution

Current frameworks for understanding the popularized language of trauma in contemporary society typically discredit or dismiss aspects of it in popular discourse. They dismiss what is available to be read and avoid taking seriously the social foundations that provide for the consumption of trauma talk by everyday members in the course of everyday living. In the balance of this thesis I argue that these conventional disciplinary takes on the popularization of trauma talk are problematic. The use of

such theoretical understandings makes it difficult, or impossible, for inquirers into the phenomenon of the popularity of trauma talk to:

- get close to the phenomenon of the popularization of trauma talk as a primary language experience;
- reconcile the presence of trauma talk in mainstream culture with the particular form of living from within which the talk is unproblematically intelligible; and
- grasp the orientation that everyday social members employ in the everyday practice of doing a popular trauma reading that provides for intelligibility of the full scope of popular trauma talk present in mainstream cultural discourse.

Discarding aspects of popular discourse that do not fit into preconceived classification schemes (Fassin & Rechtman, 2004), or dismissing those aspects deemed ignorant (Fowlers, 2012) or irrational to expert knowledges (McNally, 2005), misses the experience of social members when making their world meaningful. Not taking seriously *how* social members do an intelligible reading of popular trauma discourse means that we lose touch with the foundations that make possible what is said (the popular trauma talk occurrence) in the first instance. Without this interpretive emphasis, mainstream culture is analyzed according to the degree of presence or absence of abstractions, rather than by an awareness of the features of everyday living that provide for an openness to the full range of possibilities for a trauma experience in society. Such discrediting or disinterest means that the discourse of expertise is prioritized over all others. Yet it is only one way of seeing among a multitude of perspectives.

The present inquiry commits to a fundamental belief in the inseparable connection between language and experience. Establishing this connection is essential, because its scope greatly assists us in developing an adequate understanding of the everyday practice of doing a popular trauma reading from the position of a social member making sense as they are immersed within the province of human

practice. It helps us to understand the grounds for an intelligible reading of the full scope of popular trauma talk that are unavailable to those within a discourse of expertise horizon. Ultimately, taking the inseparable connection between language and experience seriously will enable us to understand the newspaper-reader relational context from a particular kind of Worldly existence. In the course of this inquiry, I show that a particular phenomenological hermeneutic approach best addresses the misstep inherent in conventional approaches to the phenomenon of the popularity of trauma talk. In speaking to the consequences of this misstep, I will show that this approach can help us grasp how the relational context that is established when everyday members do an intelligible trauma reading is demonstrated in the (1) manifesting and (2) disclosure of concrete possibilities for an intelligible reading from within the province of human practice.

Research Tasks: Focus of Inquiry

This dissertation not only addresses the knowledge gap and dearth of literature concerning the popularity of trauma usages in contemporary Canadian society, but also accomplishes three main tasks. First, it documents empirically the degree of change in the presence of trauma in popular mainstream discourse over time. The data confirms the growing presence and empirical reality of trauma discourse in Canadian society. This work supports De Certeau's (1984) claim about sociology's misguided focus, namely, its failure to work through how members do the practice of reading in the course of their everyday lives and confirms a presence of occurrences of the term 'trauma' in Canadian popular discourse. Second, it shows how popular trauma talk is understood in a range of current research and theorizing in social science, clinical mental health studies, and cultural studies and humanities fields. I explore the ways in which, from an interpretive orientation, trauma may be understood as intelligible for the purpose of practical living when doing a popular trauma reading. Third, it demonstrates the usefulness of phenomenological hermeneutics in sociological understandings about the kind of being-in-

the-world from within which a popular trauma reading happens. The argument analyzes the particular Worldly existence that provides for the openness of possibility necessary for establishing a relation with the full scope of popular trauma talk occurring in Canadian mainstream cultural content. Overarching this work is a demand to understand the inseparable connection between language and experience.

The Deep Concern Animating the Direction of this Inquiry

As a whole, this work is ultimately about language and its inseparable connection with how social members exist Worldly. *Popular trauma talk is the occasion* that allows us to consider this connection deeply. Essential to the approach taken in this work is the understanding that in and through language we establish our experiences, for ourselves and others, since “language makes things into possibilities of experience” (Heidegger, 1982, p. 105). Core to this interest then, is how the wide variation of intelligible trauma talk in popular discourse is brought into a relational context in and through a primary language experience.

Popular trauma talk in everyday discourse is the occasion for our inquiry as an instance wherein the appearance of the World for everyday members becomes manifest, *and* is disclosed, in a particular way from a particular stance. This inquiry does not consider the intelligibility of popular trauma talk in the everyday practice of reading as contained within the scope of the expert. Nor does it recognize trauma as an object or as a representation of some original thing. To do so would be to take on a secondary, or a derivative, view of language (Deetz, 1973). Instead, this work seeks to understand popular trauma talk from within what is read from a particular Worldly orientation.

Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation has six chapters. In Chapter One I use citation analysis to document the frequency of occurrences of the word *trauma** (and its associated variations) in *Canadian Major*

Newsstand Dailies over nearly forty years. The data indicates that not only is the word trauma of a substantial presence in contemporary popular culture but also, that it is of much greater presence than forty years ago. In addition, I use excerpts from various newspaper accounts to consider qualitative patterns of meaning drawn from different types of trauma talk occurrences in the populace discourse. Relying on particular scholarly schemes of reference, I attempt to understand of the wide variety of ways the term is employed in mainstream Canadian discourse.

Chapter Two is a review of literature. It describes contemporary research and theoretical understandings of why trauma has become increasingly present in academic and populace discourses over time. That review reveals that the popularity of trauma is understood in conventional disciplinary discourse to be the result of the popularization of trauma as a tool for representation (Caruth, 1991 & 1996; Radstone, 2007). Also it reveals that trauma is understood to be a term that has drifted from a traditional meaning in popular talk (Allen, 2008). By contrast, I argue that neither of these perspectives capture the meaningfulness of popular trauma talk as it is engaged in the modality of reading because each misses the foundations of social life. This work takes the position that the collected heightened presence of the word trauma in contemporary Canadian society is more than a signal of a new theoretical structure and more than an illustration of simple semantic alterations over time.

Chapter Three explores literature that engages the phenomenon of the popularization of trauma through questions that can be loosely categorized under the notion of causality; that is, literature that attempts to identify the kinds of social forces or social actors that have 'caused' a rise in the popular usage of the term trauma. That review shows that, collectively, these literatures recognize this phenomenon to be the result of: misuse of the term due to a misapplication of a precise concept, an overreliance on mistaken subjective experience, and the use of a trauma as a functional communication tool. For instance, McNally's (2009) contention that the excessive presence of trauma talk is a consequence of undisciplined social actors overly relying on subjective experience is considered. This

section also involves working through Fassin and Rechtman's (2004) arguments noted above. I analyze their advance that trauma talk is present in mainstream culture to the degree that trauma is used as a functional communication tool for the purposes of supporting the moral economy in a society. Working through each of these ways of understanding the popularity of trauma, this work shows that each approach takes a fundamental misstep. Individually and collectively, they misunderstand popular trauma talk because each misses the fundamental connection between language and experience. Together, these inquiries ignore the foundations of social life that make the wide variation of trauma talk occurring in popular discourse a possibility for living within the everyday lifeworld of contemporary social members.

With this understanding in place, Chapter Four describes the elements of a phenomenological hermeneutic approach outlined in terms of eight key principles. In particular I draw on the work of Stanley Deetz (1973), which stresses the importance of understanding primary language experiences. Deetz argues that we should move beyond a derivative view of language (i.e. one that sees language as an object). Instead we should engage "primary language experiences" by developing the grounds whereby language is taken as "not simply a tool used to share experience but is intrinsic to, and involved in, developing possibilities for experience" (Deetz, 1973, p. 41). Language is not a naming or labelling of an objective reality/experience. It is the means through and by which experience is constituted. For instance, to 'produce' a popular trauma reading as intelligible to one's self is to recognize what is read as a possibility for trauma in one's Worldly existence. Although happening without contemplation, this conferring of the reading as a possibility for living, in the course of reading, means that social members have 'produced' modifications of the content that enable a relational context to be established. By recognizing within what is read that trauma has appeared is to offer up to one's self and to the world a conscious awareness (although in an unannounced, pre-reflexive and taken-for-granted way) of a particular possibility for a primary language experience in the course of reading. That is, for trauma to

manifest in the reading and in order to disclose trauma to one's self, others and the world, a relational context is established by way of a dialectical interpretive process. In this way then, an instance of intelligible trauma talk is not conceivable as a mere fastening up of an experience by means of thought or perception. Thought and perception manifest themselves in and through language (Deetz, 1973). In this chapter I contend that such a belief in the inseparability of language and experience demands seeing and interpreting the experience of social members in the course of reading, from within a particular orientation: as a generic anonymous social member in a casual mood who is engaged in the everyday practice of reading.

Phenomenological hermeneutics is a theory and method that allows an inquirer to grasp the possibilities for a primary language experience. Since the approach considers the situatedness of understanding, popular trauma talk is not available as a mere communication tool or as representation of an original thing. Language, as it is made sense of in the process of reading, is the manifestation and disclosure of one's worldly existence in its nearness for the reader without contemplation. Analysis by means of phenomenological hermeneutics demands reflexive inquiry on the part of the inquirer. Such reflexivity allows the inquirer to understand the grounds of what is said from within what is said as a concrete possibility in its first instance rather than some other alternative. This section illustrates how key principles from this approach require that the seemingly self-evident nature of popular trauma talk must be questioned.

Engaging in reflexive social inquiry demands a particular kind of hermeneutic listening to understand the finite grounds that provide for the possibility of a popular trauma formulation in its first instance. Such listening is not guided by a compulsion to pose the 'right questions'. It is not available by following stringent methodological techniques grounded in natural science principles. Hermeneutic listening instead requires a deliberate attention to the text in order to collect what is 'granted' in the 'first and ultimate grounds' (Palmer, 1969, p. 71). By detailing the key principles of phenomenological

hermeneutics adopted in this work, a framework for collecting the grounds for understanding the wide variation of popular trauma talk is created.

Chapter Five is the application of the phenomenological hermeneutic approach detailed in Chapter Four. This section involves a detailed analysis of trauma talk occurrences taken from the Canadian major news dailies described in Chapter One. The analysis relies on the phenomenological hermeneutic principles outlined in Chapter Four. Popular trauma talk occurrences that are outside the limits of current discourse of expertise theorizing are considered. Each is shown to necessitate the inquirer's attention to the resources available to the particular worldly existence from within which the reading happens: the anonymous and generic social member's situational existence in a newspaper-reader relation. In particular, this chapter details the characteristic features of social life that resource how social members *do* a popular trauma talk reading.

Contemporary theorizing about the popularization of trauma in society is either unable to, or is disinterested in, considering the breadth of possibilities for a trauma reading experience in the province of human practice beyond the limits of expert discourse or secondary approaches to language. For example, contemporary trauma theory in mental health practice applies empirical criteria in order to understand the existence of trauma in a given case. Applying phenomenological hermeneutic principles allows us to see the possibilities for living in the course of reading that popular trauma talk readings open up. As is argued in this section, possibilities are more than instances of "mere opportunity" (Heidegger, 1982, p. 93). Possibilities for living are what allows human beings to move, through their connection between language and experience, to understand as they do as opposed to some other alternative. How possibility comes into being, as will be shown in Chapter Four, happens in and through an interpretive process that is characterized by a playfulness made possible by a particular openness to possibilities for a popular trauma talk reading experience. These possibilities are available in the course of doing a reading for practical purposes in the province of human practice because of the space that is

opened up in and through the modality of reading from within a generic anonymous member Worldly existence.

Given these advances, Chapter Five works through the citation analysis taken from four decades of *Canadian Newsstand Major Dailies*. Reading the full range of popular trauma formulations as unproblematically intelligible reveals a sense of self-understanding. In the modality of reading the generic and anonymous Worldly existence of the social member in a newspaper-reader relation is collected as the foundation that provides for a particular kind of openness to the wide variation of trauma talk present in popular trauma discourse. This openness is shown to enable the development of a relational context that is unavailable to the trauma specialist from within the discourse of expertise horizon of understanding. The generic and anonymous orientation is shown to provide the playfulness necessary for the popular trauma talk occurrences to be read as intelligible from within the province of human practice.

Chapter Six concludes this dissertation. In this section the focus is on the awareness that, “[i]f the word is, then it must itself also be a thing, because “thing” here means whatever is in some way” (Heidegger, 1982, p. 86). Since popular trauma occurrences are some *thing* when engaged within a mode of reading, they are experienced as meaningful by social members “only where the appropriate and therefore competent word names a thing as being, and so establishes the given being as a being” (Heidegger, 1982, p. 63). Since “[t]he being of anything that is resides in the word... Language is the house of Being” (Heidegger, 1982, p. 63), one must, in order to have a trauma experience known to one’s self and others, ‘move through’ an experience in and through language. Given the widespread presence of the word trauma in Canadian newspapers, a particular form of living is exposed. It is this particular Worldly existence that grounds the relational context necessary for the poaching and modifying activity that happens in the course of the practice of consuming this content. Characteristic of this ‘movement’ as it is taken up by the conscious social member (the member establishing an

intelligible instance as trauma through a pregiven wisdom for the modality of reading) is the connection between being-in-the-world and popular trauma talk as a primary language experience. When doing a reading as an everyday practice, social members self-understand their reading experience in and through language. Lighting up this understanding is the ultimate task of this dissertation.

Chapter 1: Presence of Trauma as a Word in Canadian Popular Discourse

To investigate the presence of trauma in its 'cultural production' (De Certeau, 1984) the frequency of use of the word 'trauma' in *Canadian Newsstand Major Dailies* was analyzed. This research covered the period of the past 37 years (i.e. from January 1st, 1978, the earliest to latest available entry within the *ProQuest* database, through to December 31st, 2014). Given that newspapers address a general audience, mention of trauma is expected to be understood by readers as intelligible and socially legitimate. The purpose of selecting a citation methodology was twofold: (1) to establish empirically the presence of the word trauma in mainstream cultural content, and (2) to collect a sample of popular trauma talk for later analysis. Instances of the use of the word trauma (and its variations, included in the search by means of the addition of an asterisk*) were considered in relation to the popularity of the word in everyday use. All English language document types were included in the search. News wires and duplicate records were excluded. Records were sorted by date with the earliest record appearing first.

Use of the Word Trauma in Canadian Major News Dailies Over Time

Tables 1.0A. - D. detail the recorded number of occurrences per annum of the word trauma in Canadian newspapers. Earliest available data from the *ProQuest* database shows that trauma appeared in 135 records in 1978. Ten years later, use of the word appeared 1911 times in Canadian major news dailies. Twenty years later, 4127 records appeared. Thirty years later there were 4906 occurrences of the word trauma in Canadian newspapers.

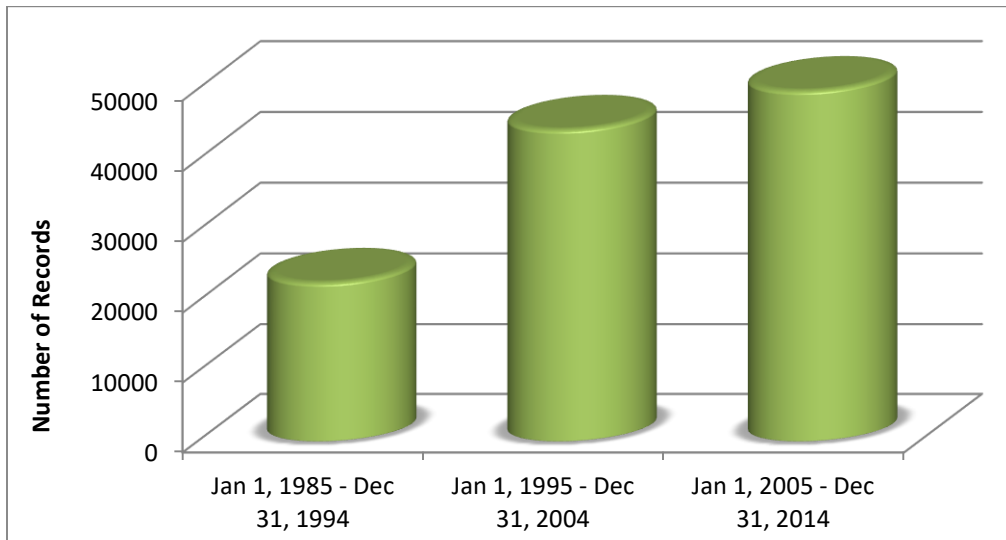
Tables 1.0A-D. Number of Newspaper Records Containing the Term *Trauma in Canadian Major Newsstand Dailies by Year (1978 – 2014).**

Table 1.0A. Number of Records from 1978-1983		Table 1.0B. Number of Records from 1984-1993		Table 1.0C. Number of Records from 1994-2003		Table 1.0D. Number of Records from 2004-2014	
Year	# of Trauma Records	Year	# of Trauma Records	Year	# of Trauma Records	Year	# of Trauma Records
1978	135	1985	741	1995	3275	2005	5356
1979	148	1986	1175	1996	3434	2006	5429
1980	170	1987	1590	1997	3297	2007	5234
1981	235	1988	1911	1998	4127	2008	4906
1982	266	1989	2672	1999	5426	2009	4653
1983	259	1990	2588	2000	5003	2010	5045
1984	300	1991	2697	2001	5120	2011	5121
		1992	2913	2002	4986	2012	4954
		1993	3103	2003	4813	2013	4471
		1994	3287	2004	4819	2014	4618

Source: Canadian Newsstand Major Dailies ProQuest Database, Search Conducted December 2014 - January 2015

Figure 1. below shows the number of records containing the word trauma in *Canadian Newsstand Major Dailies* over the last three decades. The figure shows that from 1984 to 1993 trauma* appeared in 22, 677 newspaper records. From 1994 to 2003 trauma* appeared in 44,300 newspaper records across Canadian major news dailies. From 2004 to 2014 trauma* appeared in 49,787 Canadian newspaper records. Overall Figure 1.0. demonstrates that *trauma** usages have had an exceeding presence decade over decade in mainstream Canadian culture with the highest level of presence recorded in the most recent decade.

Figure 1.0. Number of Newspaper Records Containing the term Trauma* by Decade



Results across document types reveal that trauma has been increasingly present, over the last four decades, in news accounts within Canadian major news dailies. Coinciding with this increase has been an expansion of occurrences of the word trauma within other document types since 1978. For instance, when comparing the most recent decade (Jan 1, 2005 – Dec 31, 2014) against the previous decade (Jan 1, 1995 – Dec 31, 2004) the word trauma appears in more news, more communication, and more editorial document types within Canadian major news dailies. For instance, the following trauma talk occurrences exemplify the presence of trauma in sports and entertainment within this same year. First, “yeah, I hope [the McSorley verdict] has a positive effect on the game. Any time something traumatic happens, you hope it has a positive effect” (Shoalts, October 9, 2000, p. S2). Second, “refreshingly, Musgrave does not resort to childhood trauma in order to explain her heroine’s bad choices” (Bush, October 7, 2000, p. D20).

In an arts and entertainment document type there is the following popular trauma talk within this same year.

Readers of history will welcome an ambitious new book by historian and author Erna Paris. *Long Shadows: Truth, Lies and History* (Knopf) chronicles Paris's journeys over four continents and revisits some of the most traumatic events of history. In doing so the author of the award-winning *The End of Days* reveals the often cynical way history is written, but finds hope in the struggles of ordinary people trying to make sense of cataclysm. (Ross, August 26, 2000, p. D3)

The presence of trauma in news document types is directly observable in the following trauma talk from a news article in *The Globe and Mail* newspaper in the same year.

The wife of Fred Lane was ordered held without bond yesterday as prosecutors said she could be charged with first-degree murder in the shooting death of the National Football League running back. ...“This is a major, major, traumatic event for this family,” defence lawyer Henderson Hill said. “She’s a mother of two very young children. She is frightened to death. She misses her children. She’s scared – what any young mother would be going through.” (Fryer, August 24, 2000, p. S4)

In the business section of *The Globe and Mail*, the following article, ‘Techno-timidity can be a disaster,’ is an example of the extension of trauma talk to this arena of discourse:

Many senior managers share a mindset about technology that probably stems from their first contact with personal computers. Early versions of software and operating systems were anything but hardy. Look at a PC the wrong way and the culprit would crash or the printer would go off-line. At that point, managers would have their secretaries call the help desk, they’d wait for an hour and then suffer the indignity of some young techie leading them by the hand through some obscure safeguard process they would forget before the kid left the office. My bet is that the trauma of these early humiliations forever shaped management’s attitude

towards information technology and resulted in what I call “techno-timidity.” (Belford, December 14, 2000, p. T3)

In a commentary document type, the following is a typical trauma usage:

Sure, those high school years were the nightmare years of teenage trauma. But they were also the dream years – dreams shattered, dreams deferred, dreams built. And if you can remember the dreams of your youth – even relive them, if only for a few brief hours – then aging becomes a little less the nightmare we all seem to fear. (Sher, September 27, 2002, p. A20)

Overall the *ProQuest* database queries show a presence of the word trauma in Canadian mainstream discourse. In this brute review the presence of trauma in Canadian discourse was established. Presence of the word trauma in Canadian newspapers was found to reach its height in the last decade. Again, it is important to note that this work does not seek to claim a causal reason for the increase in presence of the term trauma in Canadian dailies. Nor does this work attempt to statistically control for changes in the number of news dailies over time. Both such questions are outside of the purview of this work. The purpose of the citation analysis is in its usefulness for acknowledging the empirical reality of a presence of the term in contemporary everyday life. Given the established presence in Canadian major news dailies, trauma may be empirically confirmed as a word of everyday use in mainstream Canadian cultural content.

Trauma as a Word in Mainstream Culture: A Patterning Focus

A mere assessment of the degree of presence, however, does not in itself provide us with a full understanding of the phenomenon of the popularity of trauma and the significance of its meaning for ordinary social members in their everyday use. Dictionaries, too, are blunt instruments for establishing similarly brute observations. Still, popular word definitions are a way of recognizing common-sense word usages. For example, *The Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary* (2012) defines a ‘proper’ trauma usage as

the application of the term in situations that reflect: 1) an injury to living tissue caused by an extrinsic agent; (b) a disordered psychic or behavioural state resulting from severe mental or emotional stress or physical injury; and/or (c) an emotional upset. This officially acceptable generic or popular definition of trauma benchmarks three particular ways a competent social member can apply and hear the word trauma in the course of their normal speaking or listening. The first proper and formally sanctioned use of the term trauma outlined by Merriam-Webster's involves instances of physical injury to another's body from an external source. In contemporary society, this definition of trauma is commonly associated with care units in clinical settings that oversee physical injury cases. Within this understanding of trauma is a reference to an immediate need for urgent expert medical attention. Such an itemizing of 'proper' trauma use as physical injury to one's body is directly observable throughout articles in *Canadian Newsstand Major Dailies*. Trauma as physical injury requires an understanding of it as sudden or developed catastrophic injury, an alteration to the integrity of the physical body. Such a frame of reference can be seen in the following newspaper accounts of trauma.

Trauma, a body wound or shock produced by sudden forceful physical injury, often from an accident or violence, can lead to secondary complications such as circulatory shock and respiratory failure. It is also the sixth leading cause of death worldwide. "Trauma can affect any one of us at any time," says Dr. Iain MacPhail, program medical director at Royal Columbian Hospital. "It's an area of care where minutes matter. Caring for the critically injured takes a whole team – from initial assessment to the surgery and the close observation in the trauma unit. (Obaho, October 9, 2012, p. A18)

Traditionally, pain was considered a symptom of a disease or a condition. But in the past decade, research has shown chronic pain is a disease on its own – the result of a "rewiring" of

the nervous system after trauma, causing it to keep on firing off pain messages to the brain, even when there is no threat to the body. (Chan, October 25, 2012, p. A10)

The second ‘proper’ social application of the word trauma in everyday discourse comes from influential contemporary trauma theory texts written by scholars in human and cultural studies, the clinical mental health field, and psychobiology (Caruth 1996; Rogers 2007; van der Kolk 2005; Perry 1999). Cathy Caruth (1996), a humanities and cultural studies scholar, and Richard J. McNally (2005), a clinical mental health specialist, argue that trauma is caused by an “extrinsic agent” that generates a disordered psychic structure resulting in emotional stress and behavioural pathologies. In a similar fashion, psychobiologists Bessel van der Kolk (2005) and Bruce Perry (1999) are contemporary trauma researchers who focus on the injurious impact of external agents, in particular traumatizing events, and the effect that they have on the typical development and functioning of structures in the body.

The third ‘proper’ naming of an instance as trauma outlined by *Merriam-Webster’s* is illustrated by the influential work of Sandra Bloom (1997). According to Bloom, a clinical mental health practitioner, researcher and theorist, trauma is a sense of emotional discord generated by the cumulative impact of adverse experiences over the course of life. From this frame of reference, trauma may be experienced as a sense of widespread despair or alienation.

In order to develop a deeper understanding of each of these frames of reference, from within the discourse of expertise, I outline them briefly below. In each case I provide examples of their understandings of trauma in popular trauma discourse from within *Canadian Newsstand Major Dailies*.

Discordant Psychic or Behavioural State

Both Caruth (1996) and Rogers (2007) define trauma as an individual’s emotional reaction to a sudden and intolerable shock that penetrates the protective structures of the mind. Injury to the

psychic structure results when the mind becomes split through the creation of repressed memories that are sheltered from the conscious mind by way of the unconscious. They agree that experiences that are lived as a threat to life and cannot be assimilated are repressed from conscious awareness and come to be under the control of the unconscious structure of the newly split self. This dualism or split self creates a tension between previous and current life experiences.

Likewise, Caruth (1996) and Rogers (2007) argue that the unconscious urges the conscious self to be aware of these life threatening experiences by leaking clues of the past. Such clues are ungraspable by the trauma sufferer herself. They can, however, express themselves in non-linear and indirect ways. Caruth (1996) argues that the trained onlooker can catch clues to the leaking unconscious as it attempts to announce itself to the conscious self by noting the sufferer's silences, behaviour and language. Similarly, Rogers (2007) argues that the trauma sufferer is trapped in an unsayable form of life wherein she is unable to comprehend the significance of her language choices, bodily reactions and repetitive behaviours. Only a trained and careful onlooker is able to 'bear witness' to the presence of a psychic disorder. Without such witnessing to another's suffering, the sufferer is unable to gain insight into the repressed aspects of her traumatic experience.

Foundational to this sort of clinical understanding of trauma is the claim that it is a psychic reaction to an event that is so intolerably painful that the memory of it is repressed from consciousness. Generating a split self, this repressed remembrance results in the sufferer's inability to know the root of her current cognitive, emotional and behavioural distress while moments from their unconscious past occur via flashbacks or states of hyperarousal. Only experts can recognize actions as representations of experiences that have produced trauma suffering in the subject.

Both Caruth and Rogers agree that through listening and watching the expert is able to recognize the language of trauma through indirect cues. This expertise recognition enables them to

gather a conscious awareness of the trauma that is unavailable to trauma sufferer. According to representational theory, the trauma expert is able, by bearing witness to what is represented unconsciously, to grasp the impact of the trauma by linking current behaviours, motives, drives, reflexes and attitudes to aspects of repressed past experiences. The problem with this of representational perspective from the position of this inquiry is that it legitimates only the expert's account of the cause and nature of the patient's suffering, leaving the sufferer unable to recognize and to give voice to her own suffering.

Disordered Psychic State Resulting in Physical Injury: A Psychobiological Orientation

Psychobiologists are another authoritative voice in contemporary trauma theory. Stress researchers have used the natural science model to trace the physiological impact of sudden or cumulative stress events. According to these theorists, trauma experiences alter the integrity of one's physical body. They argue that either singular or sequential exposure to catastrophic events or significant stressors have lasting effects on the physical structure of the brain. For instance, psychobiological reactions to chronic stress have been found to include a lived state of "chronic hyperarousal" that results in depressed cognitive functioning (Kendall Takett, 1993). Perry & Pollard (1998) found that trauma experiences have a negative effect on one's ability to solve problems and make complex decisions.

With this psychobiological approach in mind, popular references to trauma characterize it as resulting from the biological structures of the brain and its functioning. Here are representations of trauma in newspaper records that can be argued to draw on the neurobiological way of framing what trauma is:

The effects of trauma are locked in the body and change brain functioning long after the trauma stops. (Davidson, September 23, 2012, p. C3)

The trauma caused by duelling adults can boost stress to such high levels that it affects the areas of the brain responsible for learning and memory, Dr. Jean Clinton, a clinical psychiatrist and professor at McMaster University in Hamilton, told a forum on high conflict and emotional harm. "Childhood experiences build the brain and build the reactivity of the stress system, and the damaging impact of that may not be shown for many, many years," said Clinton, who has worked with children and families for over 25 years. Without intervention, it can contribute to problems later in life, ranging from depression and anxiety to heart disease. (Gordon, April 20, 2012, p. L5)

It has often been said of a particularly dramatic event, such as the 911 attacks, that its consequences will "reverberate for generations". Now scientists are reporting that's no exaggeration. New evidence suggests that experiencing traumatic events can affect a person's genes and thus the lives of their children as yet unborn. (Stewart, November 24, 2010, p. B4)

The popularized version of psychobiological trauma theory therefore suggests that, when people are exposed to severe emotional events, they have an increased likelihood of developing psychic injuries that impede cognitive, behavioural and emotional development (van der Kolk, 2005; Harris and Fallo, 2001). From this perspective, severe emotional events can cause an array of physiological maladaptations, impairments and disease (van der Kolk, 2005b; Perry, 1999).

Widespread Despair and Alienation

Contemporary trauma theorist and collective trauma cultural researcher Sandra Bloom (1997; 1994), has popularized the notion of trauma as a generalized universal experience. According to Bloom, trauma is both the name of the initiating causal event (the trauma) as well as the lived impact (trauma organized living) of the originating singular or cumulative event(s). As an insidious, generalized force in people's lives, trauma is considered to be a reaction to a life event, or to cumulative stressors, that can

subconsciously affect one's present behaviour and state of mind to such a degree that trauma becomes an unannounced organizing force in one's social life. As an organizing force, trauma is a form of living wherein the sufferer engages the world 'without meaning context' (Bloom, 1997). As a result of "failing to recognize and deal with individual and collective pasts, we [social members] become trapped in a vicious cycle of destructive traumatic re-enactment as an entire social group..." (Bloom, 1997, p. 212). Bloom argues that the impact of 'trauma-organized' living is 'a kind of widespread alienation' that is experienced as "emotional isolation or dissociation, a state of estrangement between the self and the objective world" (Bloom, 1997, p. 225). Because of the widespread exposure to trauma experiences in our society, Bloom argues that trauma organized living pervades social life.

Below are examples of popular usage that reflect this cultural frame of reference. As a theory it understands the experience of trauma-inducing events to be nearly universal among social members. Recognizing trauma as a common experience in contemporary society, theorizing such as Bloom's (1997) views trauma as an organizing force in modern cultural life. As a lived sense of continued alienation and disenchantment, trauma manifests itself collectively as a pervasive mood that influences how individuals interact within one another and how people engage with their social world in repetitively victimizing ways.

Each of the following trauma formulations from popular discourse can be interpreted as drawing on the emotional discord outlined by *Merriam-Webster's* (2012). The theory of trauma culture provides a basis for understanding each formulation and as well as a credible way to relate to the world of everyday experience. In this contemporary trauma theorizing widespread maltreatment of social members denotes the presence of generalized discord resulting from past and intergenerational trauma case histories.

Unfortunately, and for some unknown reason, there's always also been a social stigma surrounding individuals who complain or "rat out" others, no matter who they are.

Whistleblowers may be seen as tattletales, martyrs, snitches and/or accused of attention seeking. Yet, all of these real and insidious pressures on individuals keep many employees from reporting the wrongdoing they see and experience and the trauma drives them deep into distress. (Bowes, September 29, 2012, p. H1)

Working from her base just west of Denver, Colo., for the last 30 years, Gibson often treats people who have a history of being under attack, such as aboriginal people and holocaust survivors. "There's a lot of intergenerational trauma that happens and really at the core of all of it is typically war. It ends up manifesting itself in so many issues and symptoms [such as the] grief we see today. But we forget, we have historical amnesia; we don't remember all of those things. We're simply holding the symptoms. It's hard to resolve it unless you see everything that predisposed you or led you up to it." (Ellis, May 17, 2012, p. C14)

To review, I have established that the word trauma is pervasive in mainstream culture. I have pointed out that according to the prevailing frames of reference within the discourse of expertise, trauma formulations in contemporary popular discourse are to be interpreted on the basis of common concretized formal definitions understood as the 'proper' application everyday trauma talk among social members. Specifically, there are three expert frames of reference from within which we can grasp how these trauma formulations suggest possible ways of understanding the possibility of a trauma experience in contemporary society. From this perspective then, the intelligibility of popular trauma talk seems reliant on key claims made in expert contemporary discourse. In the above mentioned cases, each instance connects to the 'rational' foundational claims of trauma specialists. Through these examples of popular trauma formulations there appears to be a fit between popular and expert discourse that suggests: (1) a sense of appropriateness to each of the trauma formulations in popular

discourse, and (2) that these frames of reference are helpful or appropriate for understanding popular trauma talk in mainstream discourse. However, I will show that much of mainstream trauma talk falls outside of the limits of expert discourse.

Taking on a Pattern Orientation: From a Word to a Concept and the Problem of Subjectivity

Although the word trauma is a term of pervasive use and is widely used in contemporary Canadian discourse, we have but a narrow vision of its intelligibility. Each instance of expert engagement differs in its ability to 'catch' and observe representations or symptoms of lived experiences of trauma. Taken collectively, contemporary trauma theory, as a discourse of expertise, agrees that, as a concept, trauma *is*:

- an emotional reaction to a sudden or cumulative catastrophic or highly stressful event(s) that leaves an indelible mark;
- induced by an experience so intolerably painful that to face it would mean risking one's emotional/cognitive/physical health;
- consciously unavailable to the sufferer and therefore incommunicable to the self and to others;
- observable only indirectly via technically oriented watchfulness and manifests by way of maladaptive bodily, cognitive, emotional and behavioural symptoms; and
- an organizing force in actions and cognitions in the here and now, yet unknowingly so to the afflicted person without expert insight.

Expert discourse requires that essential criteria be met before an experience can be considered trauma-inducing and an appropriate emotional trauma reaction can be intelligibly formulated. Trauma from this perspective invariably stems from a sudden or cumulative catastrophic event(s) that is

intolerably painful. An intelligible trauma formulation is thus necessarily grounded in the a priori requirement that it is possible to identify a sufficiently catastrophic trauma-inducing event. Without the capacity to identify an adequately catastrophic event, or an accumulation of sufficiently stressful events, the requisite grounds for determining or identifying are thus unintelligible from within a discourse of expertise horizon.

The American Psychological Association (APA) standardizes the evaluative criteria necessary for determining an event as potentially trauma-inducing. According to the APA, a legitimate trauma-inducing experience is one that is a

direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one's physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of another person; or learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate (Criterion A1). The person's response to the event must involve intense fear, helplessness, or horror (or in children, the response must involve disorganized or agitated behavior) (Criterion A2). (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder, Fourth Edition, Text Revision, 2000, p. 463)

According to this professional directive, a legitimate recognition of trauma requires that an individual be directly or indirectly involved in an event that is catastrophic in particular and measurable ways. Event particulars include a dire actual or potential injury to self or other which must trigger a penetrating sense of 'fear, helplessness, or horror'. Daily news events, however, linking suggested causes to attendant behavioural/emotional/cognitive/social reactions, often lack this essential character. However, people confront uses of the term in ways that talk about mundane events such as disappointments, simple frustrations, and basic discomforts. For instance, the following trauma

occurrence in a Canadian newspaper shows how trauma is used when talking about a situation of disappointment.

When we denied our athletes the opportunity to compete in the 1980 Summer Olympics at Moscow, many dreams were shattered with years of strenuous training and financial hardships endured without reward. Reluctantly, yet patriotically, they accepted this personal, emotional trauma on the basis that our country was taking a firm stand in protesting against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. (Boone & Bendzik, February 23, 1981, p. S9)

The trauma of computers (Sainbury, August 14, 1982, p. 7), a general interest newspaper article, depicts an individual's frustrations with their computer as a trauma-inducing event:

I, too, am heartily sick of the expression "computer error". A terminal may occasionally sulk, or blow a fuse, or chatter away all night in blissful ignorance of the fact that its paper supply has slipped off the pegs; and very seldom the mainframe may suffer some kind of traumatic electrical experience and decide to forget everything that happened yesterday.

Other instances of popular trauma talk seem flippant or joking. Such formulations are also beyond the limits imposed by the discourse of expertise. For instance, in his letter to the editor, Lloyd Atkins (December 3, 2010, p. A13) writes:

Given the current norms in our society, I believe I can successfully sue my late parents for child neglect and maybe even child abuse. ... My case will be on the fact that my brother and I were only given two toys a year, on our birthday and at Christmas. We were thereby forced to invent our own games and build our own toys. In my lawsuit, I will contend that, by depriving me of an endless supply of toys, my parents subjected me to irreconcilable trauma. With a slick lawyer and a glib child psychologist, I can win this case....

In this instance, the everyday member mocks the expert and the misuse of trauma. In speaking from this point of view, the writer problematizes the clear and obvious absence of a catastrophic event. In his frustration, Atkins' (2010) parodies the use of the word trauma in mainstream culture. In devising his facetious formulation, he offers a baldly selfish motive for his actions. Though satiric in its intention, Atkins' letter thwarts the realm of the experts and their empirical assessment criteria in everyday trauma talk. It shows a subversion of the 'proper' form of trauma talk organized by trauma elites. At the same time Atkins' letter shows an acknowledgement of principles from within the clinical frame of reference in his suggestion of the ever-present malingerer who will be afforded undeserved accommodation by clinical mental health experts.

Similarly, in a general interest record entitled, *'The trauma of turning 30: Goodbye acne, hello me,'* writer Lipoenko states:

The years between ages 32 and 37 were "very chaotic and discordant. You suddenly begin to realize that you're not young anymore....you start grappling with death and you think the glass is half empty instead of seeing it as half full". (June 2, 1983, p. 20)

In another general interest story entitled, *'The trauma of adjusting to a clean-shaven face,'* (Gleick, December 6, 1984, p. M2) speaks of the 'trauma' experienced by himself and his wife as a result of shaving his decade-old beard. Gleick describes the event as a "neurological awakening" that induced "panic," and "a cold sweat". His wife was similarly 'traumatized'. She was rendered "speechlessness". For her "jaw dropped like a guillotine blade" and she "sat, staring, for what seemed like hours."

Such examples of everyday trauma talk are, of course, meant as jokes. Each formulation retains essential features of trauma as a concept as it is understood in expert discourse, but stretches the concept beyond the limits of intelligibility for that discourse. For instance, Atkins' (2010) use of the notion of "irreconcilable trauma" denotes a fundamental characteristic of trauma within the

contemporary literature, namely, that trauma leaves an indelible mark on the psyche and cannot typically be analyzed without expert intervention. Producing a “neurological awakening” which coincides with the trauma symptomatology of hyperarousal and hypervigilance, commonly cited markers in trauma suffering. Further, in characterizing the experience of someone sitting speechless and staring from the shock of a sudden traumatic event, Gleick suggests the way requisite diagnostic criteria are observed in clinical practice.

Lipovenko’s (June 2, 1983) contextualization of an experience as trauma was formulated by outlining cumulative events (i.e. aging) as “very chaotic and discordant,” a characterization that speaks to a cognitive and emotionally maladaptive orientation to the world. This contextualizing of an experience as trauma follows suit with key advances within cultural trauma theory (Bloom, 1997). However, it, too, misses the fundamental criterion of an event that is sufficiently catastrophic to one’s integrity and measurably knowable by the trained trauma expert through an apprehension in the trauma sufferer of intense fear, helplessness and horror.

We have reached an interesting juncture. I have shown that some trauma formulations found in contemporary everyday talk are intelligible when seen through the lens of expert foundational principles. Others, however, are not. Contemporary popular trauma talk often involves the use of the term in ways that do not meet the professional criterion for conceptualizing trauma. Such cases include instances of trauma treated as jokes or parodies. In other instances popular trauma formulations lack a precipitating catastrophic event. While we can collect examples of popular talk using the discourse of expertise as the basis for our understanding, much talk falls outside of such principles. If this is the case, then I would argue that using exclusively professional criteria to determine whether some instance of talk is intelligible as a meaningful trauma usage now seems unproductive. In doing so, we make much of the popular trauma talk in mainstream discourse appear irrational or ridiculous.

We are now left in a position of questioning the meaning of popular trauma formulations. We seem to be left wondering whether popularized or everyday trauma talk is empty. Everyday use of the word seems less specific than when it is employed by experts in particular professional fields. If popular talk is irrational and inaccurate, what accounts for its popularity? If trauma formulations are a pervasive feature of mainstream culture and their meanings are disparate and unstructured, how can we develop an understanding of the popularity of trauma formulations in contemporary discourse?

Currently four responses exist to the question, why are trauma formulations so popular? Trauma formulations are popularized because of: (1) an orientation to representation, (2) a weakened version of an original structured linguistic form, (3) imprecise diagnoses made by undisciplined social actors relying on subjective experience, and (4) a social need to express victimhood by way of a functional communication tool. In the following two chapters I work through each of these responses in order to develop an understanding of the various ways contemporary inquiries understand the popularity of trauma talk. I consider each explanation as a problem and response posed from a particular lifeworld. Given that my theoretical orientation is a phenomenological hermeneutics one, my objective is not to determine which of these constitutes the 'correct' form for an intelligible trauma formulation. To do so would be to adopt a secondary orientation to language. Instead, I demonstrate that we need to understand each of these formulations on its own terms; how it is particular to a concern and an occasion.

Chapter 2: Understanding Increased Prevalence of Trauma Talk

Contemporary trauma theory, as developed in the cultural studies and humanities field (Caruth, 1991, 1996; Rogers, 2007) for instance, is one significant way to understand the popularity of trauma in mainstream culture. As an influential expert discourse, this framework for understanding trauma is widely relied upon (Radstone, 2007, p. 22). From the point of view of its specialized professional practitioners, Caruth and Rogers offer a particular framework for determining how a trauma formulation is properly established. Yet, while expertise is certainly productive and valuable, much trauma talk in popular discourse goes undiscovered. According to this representational theory of trauma, trauma suffering is observable as a reaction to a breach of the integrity of the mind or body. It is caused by an exposure to a catastrophic event or cumulative stressors, and is so intolerably painful that physical or cognitive maladaptation results. Characteristic of this reaction is the inability of sufferers to relate their lived experience of the trauma-inducing event to their current relation to the world. This expert discourse frames maladaptive bodily/cognitive/behavioural/emotional impairments as bases for explaining the impact of traumatic exposure on an individual. Given that an individual is unable to match past experience with current motivations for their behaviour, actions in the here and now for the traumatic subject lack genuine subjective and intersubjective meaning. Traumatized individuals are characteristically unable to adequately recognize accurate motivations for their behaviours. Therefore, these theorists contend that trauma sufferers are unable to assimilate their trauma-inducing experience into conscious awareness. An awareness of the impact of their traumatic experience on their everyday world remains outside the scope of their mundane social exchange. As a result of this disconnect between language and experience, trauma is understood within this expert discourse as lived through bodily manifestations rather than through language. Trauma is foreseen as existing as the 'unsayable' (Rogers, 2007) in the everyday life of the trauma sufferer.

Speech requires that words be placed in a social context to make their meaning intersubjectively comprehensible. But the trauma sufferer “has to censor other things – things that won’t make sense and things that can’t be heard.” The trauma sufferer thus “represses what can’t be received” (Rogers, 2007, p. 199). Put differently, such contemporary trauma theorists suggest that when behaviour is isolated from consciousness, as is characteristically the case with trauma, an individual is unable to communicate the implications of their trauma experiences to others (Grant, 1999). In this way, contemporary trauma discourse formulates trauma as intelligible through select expert methods: “the traumatized speak in spite of themselves and psychoanalysis [from a trauma expert] is there to witness” (Kid, 2005, p. 124). From the standpoint of expert discourse in the mental health field and cultural studies and humanities fields, the phenomenon of trauma prevents sufferers from knowingly communicating a genuine trauma experience while in the midst of a trauma reaction. The objective of this section is to understand current theorizing surrounding the question of ‘why trauma is so popular’ as a term used in contemporary discourse.

Trauma Prevalence Due to the Theory of Representation

Susannah Radstone (2007) argues that since the 1990’s trauma has been the subject of continual popularization in academia and particularly in cultural studies and the humanities. According to Radstone (2007, p. 10) the ‘feverish’ popularization of trauma is directly observable in (1) the rise of ‘trauma theory’ rooted in the humanities; (2) the overabundance of a particular trauma model in disciplinary-specific publications, conferences and journals; and (3) the contemporary lack of critical engagement with the use and consequences of “the category of trauma theory” in media, film and literature. Radstone ties the popularization of trauma to a particular ‘fascination’ and ‘fashion’ that “can certainly be mapped with reference to the publication of particular texts that have since become

seminal within the field” (2007, p. 9). The foremost influential texts are those by Cathy Caruth (1996 & 1991).

Radstone finds that, as a framework for realizing trauma, popular trauma theory is a ‘vibrant force’ in film, literature and art studies that enables members in this lifeworld to “share in common a drive to engage with and reveal trauma’s ‘traceless’ or absent presence” (2007, p. 22). Central to the popularization of trauma studies is a unified interest in ‘personal or collective catastrophe’ in literary, film and media studies where texts are engaged with as “the belated remembrance of trauma” (Radstone, 2007, p. 22). Since within this model (Caruth, 1996 & 1991) the presence of trauma is available only through representations that are signals of trauma that must be mediated, the cultural studies or humanist scholar is able to ‘bear witness’ to trauma that is unknown to a given speaker, and is unconsciously aware trauma narrator or testifier (Radstone, 2007).

Trauma talk in cultural studies and humanities that is grounded in this model positions a social actor as unable to be a witness to her own trauma event. Trauma is unremembered yet repetitively re-enacted in ways observable to the objective trained onlooker. In such contemporary theorizing, an event is traumatic when there is a conscious absence of traces of the catastrophic event (lack of witnessing). The content is unassimilable and therefore the nature of the event is consciously unknowable. The work of contemporary trauma theory, in bearing witness to the traces of trauma that are consciously unknowable, is to “recover the referentiality of trauma memory” (Radstone, 2007, p. 12-13). Guided by the work of Caruth (1995 & 1996) such traces can be objectively discovered through a trained attention to signals of a repressed history in one’s language and repetitive actions.

Radstone (2007) argues that the cultural studies and humanities model has generated a basis for a general a general theory of representation. It establishes the link between observed representation and the experience of a speaker. Radstone argues that actualities for living become equivalent to the

trauma 'event' with the link between an actual event and trauma suffering representations made observable in 'found' repetitive behaviours and signifying language. Radstone notes: "in trauma theory, this absence of traces testifies to a representation's relation to a trauma event/actuality" (p. 12). Found repetitive behaviours and signifying language then come to be seen as representations of actual leaks of an unknown past. Such leaks are thus evidence the scholar uses to establishment a trauma formulation. For Radstone (2007), moving through and beyond the problem of representation and actuality in this way results in an understanding of trauma formulations based on a '*general* theory of representation,' that is, where "trauma theory becomes generalizable to the whole field of representation" (p. 12). For Radstone (2007) the consequence of a detached observer recognizing the meaning an experience that plays out in a person's actions and language is the "pathologization of all life lived through language and representation – of all life, that is, beyond very early infancy" (Radstone, 2007, p. 12-13). The implication for such pathologizing of life is the attribution of trauma to instances where trauma may not exist. With an event taken as a representation of an emotional state, Radstone (2007) predicts the unbridled and inappropriate expanse (and thus pervasiveness) of trauma from an exceptional to a common reality.

In addition to pathologizing all life, Radstone (2007) contends that the generalizability of the popularized trauma model puts it in contradiction with the exact scientific studies it proposes to germinate from and integrate with. For instance, the logic of neuroscientific theorizing on the impact of trauma on the brain demands a recognition of the difference between the extraordinary experience of trauma and the encoding of mundane experiences and memories. Radstone asks, "if trauma's encoding is extraordinary, then can that 'encoding' become the foundation for a general theory of representation?" (2007, p. 13). Problematic for Radstone is the casualness of popularized trauma formulations in cultural studies and the humanities.

Radstone (2007) posits that how trauma theory defines its traumatized subject is another way this popularized trauma category moves its followers through the incongruence of collected orientations and theoretical positions. Central to trauma theory is the prime role of the witness as listener. The witness is particularly attuned to the traces of trauma that are unknown to the subject who is unknowingly providing the trauma narrative. Trauma theory “emphasises intersubjectivity and the role of the listener or witness in the bringing to consciousness of previously unassimilated memory” (Radstone, 2007, p. 13). Radstone notes that the primacy of the role of the listener poses problems by inviting incongruence in theoretical positions integrated into the trauma theory paradigm. For instance, Radstone (2007) notes that accentuating narrative, witnessing and the role of intersubjectivity of memory is counter to the principles of neurobiology, yet ‘it draws on both strands’ (p. 13).

To move through and beyond the impasse created by the need for an autonomous subject, on the one hand, the need to work with what is unsaid but knowable, on the other, Radstone (2007) argues that this popular trauma theory model dismisses the complexity of the inner mind by its mere isolating of events and emphasis on the role of the language expert as distinguished from that of mediator. The consequence of popular trauma theory’s “topography of the inner world [is that it] dispenses with the layering of conscious, subconscious and unconscious, substituting for them a conscious mind in which past experiences are accessible, and a dissociated area of the mind from which traumatic past experiences cannot be accessed” (Radstone, 2007, p. 16). This, “depthless topography of the mind entails the abandonment of Freud’s emphasis on the mediating role of unconscious processes in the production of the mind’s scenes and meanings, including those of memory” (Radstone, 2007, p. 16).

Radstone (2007) argues that the problem of subjectivity in cultural studies and humanities scholarship is *moved through and beyond* in popular trauma theory by creating an expectation of autonomy in the traumatized subject. Spurring this need has been an ‘ideological-political’ interest that would afford the traumatized subject sovereignty, albeit a passive one (Radstone, 2007, p. 15).

Radstone (2007) therefore finds serious contradictions and problematic positions in this trauma theory model. The model is characterized by a trauma subject who does not know or remember but one who forgets yet is haunted by and repetitively replays his or her unassimilated memories that are traceless to the subject but are recognizable belated memories for a trained witness. "The knowledge this subject lacks is not that of its own unconscious process, but of an event that cannot be remembered" (Radstone, 2007, p. 20).

Radstone contends that the popularization of, and now lived fascination with, trauma within academia was made possible by the presence of a particular context and social location in cultural studies and humanities. This academic context was generated, according to Radstone (2007), by the rise of a particular cultural movement and a particular mood that fuelled the interpretation, reading, and subsequent influence of these texts in the way that made them opposed to some other alternative. Through the work of Caruth (1995, 1996) trauma theory has become pervasive within the cultural studies and humanities as a result of (1) influential cultural directions within the discipline and (2) particular moods galvanizing in the discipline (Radstone, 2007, p. 10-11). Radstone (2007) argues that there are several consequences that have resulted from the popularization of trauma theory and the direction that trauma inquiry has taken in literary, film and media studies. There is a loss of depth to trauma inquiry with the topographic reading and usage of the psychoanalytic tradition. Redefining subjectivity by constituting the traumatized subject as sovereign and autonomous has resulted in a focus on the traumatizing event causing the dissociation of experience. Lessening the role of unconscious processes means that trauma inquiry does not focus on the continuum of psychic states as outlined by Freud but rather results in a focus on "distinguish[ing] between the 'normal' and the 'pathological'. One has either been present at or has 'been' traumatized by a terrible event or one has not" (Radstone, 2007, p. 19).

Trauma Prevalence Due to a Weakened Version of the Etymological Root

In addition to theorizing about the popularization of trauma as a result of a treating trauma as a tool for representation, additional inquirers argue that trauma has reached heightened popularity because it is a term commonly used in ways that extend beyond its original meaning. For the purposes of this work the *Pocket Fowler's Modern English Usage*, second edition³ (*Fowler's* hereafter) is usage that speaks to the popularity of the term trauma in everyday discourse. This version of *Fowler's* was edited by Robert Allen and was published in 2008. In the "Preface to the second edition" Allan states that "this *Pocket* edition is a smaller version of the most famous book on its subject ever written, H. W. Fowler's *Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, first published in 1926 and still regarded as a classic treatment" (*Fowler's*, 2008, p. v). Further in this preface Allan remarks that "core vocabulary continues to develop new meanings and uses" in that "in some areas usage has moved on dramatically" whereby "new vogue uses proliferate" everyday discourse (*Fowler's*, 2008, p. v). Relying on a phenomenological hermeneutic orientation, the task of this inquirer is to "formulate the grounds that make" the *Fowler's* "speech possible" (Bonner, 2013, p. 26). In this way, *Fowler's* usage is recognizable as a particular possibility for understanding popular trauma talk in everyday contemporary discourse. In the subsequent analysis, the *Fowler's* content will be shown to be grounded in a "traditionalist or sticklerish" interest in language use and meaning. It is from this situatedness that the *Fowler's* usage will be considered.

According to *Fowler's* (2008) the contemporary everyday use of the word trauma as an uncontrollable and deeply distressing state reflects a weakening of its original meaning. Trauma originated as a word used for a serious physical injury. It has now become "more widely used to refer to emotional shock following a stressful event or, more generally, to an experience that is deeply

³ *Fowler's* is used here for the purposes as a usage for one relation to the popularity of the term trauma.

distressing” (Fowler’s, 2008, p. 617). Fowler’s (2008) argues that contemporary popular word usages are far apart from the etymological root of trauma (the Greek word τραῦμα meaning “wound” and its active tense (τιτρώσκω) meaning “I injure”). It is this movement away from its original conception that Fowler’s (2008) blames for the predominant contemporary popularized use of trauma as an ambiguous state of emotional stress. Specifically, Fowler’s states, “the word [trauma] is both countable and uncountable: one can experience trauma or a trauma; the plural form is traumas. It is constantly weakened or trivialized in newspaper reports” (2008, p. 617). Fowler’s depicts such a weakened version in everyday newspaper discourse when citing a newspaper report associating trauma with experiences of trivial discomforts, mild stressors, or basic inconveniences of life: “Blair crashed on with his schedule, side-stepping the trauma of a strike by South African Airline’s ground crew – Observer, 1996” (2012, p. 617).

Coinciding with the popular uses in major Canadian dailies that are outside the limits of expert discourse, Fowler’s (2008) also finds that mainstream trauma formulations include a wide continuum of trauma inducing events and disparate qualities. Although instances of popular trauma talk do contain a precipitating event of an appropriate magnitude in select instances such as trauma resulting from wartime experiences, interpersonal violence and sexual abuse, Fowler’s (2008) finds that it is also a word applied wrongly to speak of instances of mere lived discomforts and frustrations occurring in the course of daily living. These usages Fowler’s (2008) targets as instances of misuse. Instances that preclude serious physical or emotional injury Fowler’s contends are misuses made by a speaker who is pulling away from the etymological root of the word. Such instances of misuse in modern popular trauma talk makes trauma so ambiguous that it regularly lacks a finite meaning. Examples of mundane experiences characterized as traumatic might be nervousness before marriage, an electoral defeat, a loss of income, a job loss, an inability to compete in an athletic competition, a child being without her favorite toy, commuting aggravations, and computer problems. A sample of such instances follows.

- And the PC leader was soon sufficiently recovered from the trauma of this “vicious Twitter attack.” (Coyle, Oct 29, 2010, p. A8)
- ...the lingering trauma on baby boomers’ balance sheets – the average U.S. household has lost more than \$100,000 (U.S.) in net worth over the past three years. (Rosenburg, September 29, 2010, p. B17)
- Describing the United States ‘energy trauma’, Mr. Eizenstat observed: “This would appear to be the worst of times. I do not need to detail for you the political damage we are suffering from all of this.” (Smith, July 9, 1979, p.1)
- In speaking about recent electoral defeat Conservative leader Joe Clark stated, “we have all been through a period of real trauma”, he told the gathering. “But we all know how to turn adversity into advantage” (Martin, February 17, 1983, p. 8).
- ...“when the firing is done, once the trauma has been absorbed, people can ask themselves: ‘What do I love to do?’”...The brutal firings they’re cursory, demeaning, happening on Friday at 4:30 p.m., “as if their contributions never existed” happen because of poor management skills...The task is seen as an unpleasant one, completed without taking into account the emotional reaction of the person being fired.” (Schwartz, Feb 1, 1985, p. D2)

Cumulatively this popular trauma discourse demonstrates a wide range of possibilities for seeing mundane annoyances and mild discomforts as intelligible instances of trauma. None of the above usages meet the requisite ‘catastrophic’ criterion upon which a trauma conception is foreseeable in a contemporary trauma theory. The principles of trauma expert discourse would not find an intelligible

trauma formulation in these cases. Like Radstone (2007), *Fowler's* (2008) problematizes popular trauma formulations as demonstrating inaccurate use even though each instance involves socially recognizable situations. Nor do such instances support the requisite characteristics for an intelligible trauma formulation given its etymological root. Given their presence in mainstream talk, we must recognize that additional possibilities for a traumatic lived experience, beyond the limits to which expert discourse and understanding is confined, exist within the natural setting of the everyday life. Further, since popular discourse is beyond the bounds of contemporary trauma theory, its intelligibility cannot be gathered through a fulsome reliance on this professional understanding. Yet popular mainstream discourse, such as that found in newspapers, is not typically problematic for the everyday member engaged in the everyday practice of a popular trauma reading.

According to *Fowler's* (2008), trauma in its contemporary form lacks structure to the point of becoming ambiguous. Because of this etymological stretching, members mistakenly apply the term. They use the term inappropriately to explain and characterize instances of trauma which are not 'in fact' proper uses of the word. A term used to speak of serious injury now encompasses instances of stressful events that include even the mild daily discomforts of living. In losing its original meaning (or at least moving beyond it), trauma in popular talk is largely an empty term mistakenly applied in routine usage. However, the nature of such an understanding presupposes language to be a situational invention, with meaning hastily assigned, understanding language as a fastening of a word onto some instance or event as it happens. "Although sometimes a word may be used daringly in an unusual way to express something unusual about the situation, is it not what is unusual in the situation, not the user, that has given the word the new significance?" (Palmer, 1969, p. 230). Rather than the diminishing of the structure of an original form, 'trauma' in these new formulations is interesting as possibilities for being now available in and through a Worldly relation. Replacing a personal categorizing of immediate language is an interpretation of a conscious awareness of a traumatic event as lived experience.

Without such an understanding of the nature of language, the inseparable connection between language and experience is missed.

It is not only everyday members that have stretched popular use beyond its intended roots. Embedded within this understanding of the popularization of trauma is the notion of undisciplined social actors inventing their own language, assigning of meaning to the word in hopelessly vague ways. However, “we do not in fact invent our language, nor do we assign the meanings that the words have, nor can we solely through subjective willing make words say something other what they in fact do say” (Palmer, 1969, p. 230). To believe such is to treat words objectively, that is, to separate words from understanding. Isolating doing from saying (and thus understanding) is to isolate one’s experiences in the world from how one understands the world from their relational context. Separating words from experience means that a situation is objectively available outside of formulating it as such in and through language. That is to say that situations in which trauma is formulated are divorceable from a course of living by worldly participation in and through language.

Language is not an inner world or private affair. It is, rather, the medium through which the world comes to exist for us and through us. In a trauma formulation, one’s a conscious awareness of the existence of trauma manifests itself relationally and situationally through language. In a trauma formulation, the speaker is not creating the language of trauma, or a ‘new language’ as implied by *Fowler’s* (2008), because language is how humans come to understand their own relational existence. A new language exists for being in the world because a particular way of being in the world provides the grounds for this new or expanded concrete possibility.

Language is not a skill or an ability that individuals possess. It is not static and permanent, because being is not static and permanent. Language is, “the medium in and through which one has a ‘world’; it makes an open place in being through the disclosure of being” (Palmer, 1968, p. 231). My

understanding of myself, my world and others exists to me as long as the realm of language remains open and available to me as a meaningful means of shared understanding. Implied within *Fowler's* claims is a projection of the social member as misguided and undisciplined in his or her use of trauma as a static objectively available word to be secondarily applied to describe and explain social life following primary lived experiences. However, as a result of this derivative understanding of language, *Fowler's* is unable to see that language is a primary experience within one's relational context for intelligible living. Since our ways of seeing what is trauma have changed, so too, then, have the ways through which trauma can be experienced. Language change, however, leaves us a way of seeing and experiencing trauma as rooted in a past, as lived in and through the here and now, and as looking to the future from within a particular orientation to the world. Deepening our understanding of language allows us to view popular trauma talk as something other than a process of applying stagnant word codes after the fact to worldly events. Trauma formulations are not simple replications of an objectified meaning as *Fowler's* (2008) would have it.

Fowler's (2008) concern about the drift from its traditional form leads to a quick dismissal of possible additional meanings. In this peremptory attitude is a refusal to view language from the point of view of popular intelligibility. Repositioning this view requires acknowledging the limits of one's own finite understanding. Central to *Fowler's* inability to consider everyday trauma talk as being outside its own proposed this linguistic structure and meaning is a deep concern for linguistic relativism. However, variation does not automatically confer emptiness or ambiguity.

At the heart of the phenomenon of the popularization of trauma in contemporary society, according to *Fowler's*, is the alteration of the word from its original and traditional meaning. For *Fowler's* a judgement of 'proper' or 'improper' trauma use is established by reliability and replicability of an original linguistic structure. Accordingly, a 'proper' trauma formulation is one that applies the term based on its original structural criteria that is rooted in an historic way of knowing, seeing, and using

trauma. Problematically, *Fowler's* approach fails to recognize that such difference from an original linguistic structure does not confer emptiness or ambiguity. Nor does strangeness from an original equate to a sense of unstructured relativism that would render any instance of lived life as a possible trauma. Underlying this demand for a return to a structured and limited use of trauma in popular talk is a fear of its meaning being plunged into relativism, since only the original linguistic structure is seen as assuring accurate use. But accuracy is tenuous in popular discourse, and an argument that words move away from their original form and meaning by social compulsion is to argue that words are objective. It is to argue that the meaning of words is fixed. From *Fowler's* position, the understanding of trauma is different from what it was as a result of changes in something other than the phenomenon itself. Trauma, then, has become something different relative to influential factors outside of its original defining structure as opposed to a different possibility for experience. Such an approach requires seeing the phenomenon of the popularization of trauma in contemporary society as rooted in relativism. Bernstein describes relativism as

the basic conviction thatconcepts must be understood as relative to a specific conceptual scheme, theoretical framework, paradigm, form of life, society, or culture. Since the relativist believes that there is (or can be) a nonreducible plurality of such conceptual schemes, he or she challenges the claim that these concepts can have a determinant and univocal significance. For the relativist, there is no substantive overarching framework or single metalanguage by which we can rationally adjudicate or univocally evaluate competing claims of alternative paradigms. (1983, p. 8)

Unlike *Fowler's* (2008), phenomenological hermeneutics "acknowledges that the variety of different interpretations does not invite us to speak of relativism" or to think of all instances of trauma equally (Bernstein, 1983, p. 125). It allows us to interpret these varied instances as "the process of coming into being of meaning" (Bernstein, 1983, p. 125) not as a state of inner mind but rather through

a language. In this way, each trauma formulation may be considered an instance of meaning coming into conscious awareness through the 'happening' of understanding of this possibility of experience as trauma among generic social members. The meaning that comes into being is characteristically grounded in one's historic, linguistic and cultural prejudgements.

Popular trauma talk exposes a particular form of life. The usage conveyed through a trauma formulation is necessarily tied to the lived realities of a social member from within a given sphere of life. This makes the type of trauma usage, as opposed to some other alternative, recognizable to the social inquirer who seeks to collect how practical meaning making is taken for granted among social actors. In direct consequence, popular trauma usages that typify contemporary trauma theory discourse are but one, albeit significant, intervention into popular trauma usages in mainstream culture. That is, the contemporary trauma theory model or the traditional linguistic approach are merely single possibilities for the meaning of being in the world from within a particular situatedness. The quotes below illustrate the multiple realities relied upon in popular discourse appearing in Canadian major news dailies. For instance, the following popular trauma usage is drawn from a biomedical situatedness. The usage takes trauma as a physical injury.

"They all say it would be unheard of to divert a trauma patient except in highly unusual circumstances," he said. "And in the States, no one would dream of this." Patients needing trauma care are those with potentially life-threatening injuries usually suffered in a crime or accident, such as a fall or car crash. (Mickelburgh, October 11, 2000, p. A7)

The following trauma usage also draws on the biomedical model and represents a neuroscientific intervention into trauma talk in mainstream discourse.

"Scientists may have found a biological reason to explain why two people who witness the same event will, years later, often have different memories of what happened,"... "It seems that every

time an old memory is pulled into consciousness, the brain takes it apart, updates it and then makes new proteins in the process of putting the memory back into long-term storage. The fact that new proteins are made means the memory has been transformed permanently to reflect each person's life experience – not the memory itself.” The research, carried out on animals at the Center for Neural Science at New York University is described in the journal *Nature* (Aug. 17). In the long run, said a University of Washington psychologist, these findings may be used clinically to erase traumatic memories: A patient would recall the troubling event and be given a drug or other agent to disrupt memory reconsolidation. (Kesterton, October 9, 2000, p. A.6)

The following reference is to a collective and overarching experience that signals the presence of cultural trauma theory amidst the public trauma discourse.

That rising black tide of oil will boost demand for other forms of energy such as natural gas. But the disruption and trauma in the world economy caused by an oil shock will inevitably carry a cost for investors. (Bell, October 7, 2000, p. R3)

As Fassin and Rechtman (2004) argue, a significant intervention in popular trauma discourse comes from a judicial or legislative sphere of life. Below is an example of the presence of this reality presenting itself as a socially legitimate rendering of an instance of trauma.

The new Jan Doe is seeking \$4.1 million for herself and \$400,000 for her husband and two children for the injuries and trauma she suffered, which included a broken leg, neck and back injuries and psychological damage. (Gadd, October 13, 2000, p. A19)

Contemporary trauma theory in cultural studies and humanities forms a basis for making sense of instances of popular trauma. As one intervention in public discourse on trauma, the reality of trauma involves pinpointing a representation of trauma that is dependent on symptomatology outlined in clinical classifications.

As beings in the world with others, our reality is “shared with others” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 28). Reality was earmarked as “a quality appertaining to phenomena that we recognize as having a being independent of our own volition (we cannot “wish them away”)” with knowledge defined as, “the certainty that phenomena are real and that they possess specific characteristics” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 1). Berger and Luckmann (1967) argue that through a given reality social members exist in a social world that they experience as objectively real and subjectively known. This match between the objectively real and the subjectively known provides a sense of confidence in a measure of predictability about the social world and one’s place within it. Applying to our phenomena at hand then, popular trauma discourse, like that outlined above, has within it some essential form that cannot be removed from the usage. Regardless of the type of trauma usage (the clinical classification of symptomotological, neurobiological, physical, or cultural spheres of reality), each explication in popular discourse adheres to a specific meaning structure that gives rise to the usage as rational, sensible and therefore meaningful for the sense making of everyday life. The demand for such a foundational structure for trauma usage in everyday talk is directly observable in both the structure of the explication below as well as the full context of meaning of the members’ rejection of facetious use.

However, there’s a silver lining behind this weak script and botched production. Johnson has failed in an attempt to write a farce about the trauma of sexual abuse. (Taylor, October 14, 2000, p. R18)

This Thanksgiving weekend, more than a few readers will suffer from turkey trauma: returning form to mom’s, dad’s or even both parents’ place for holidays, many grownups are reduced to adolescents. (Izzo & Marsh, October 7, 2000, p. R3)

Through the demonstrated rejection and facetious use, these examples demonstrate a practical awareness of a proper, and therefore an improper, a socially meaningful trauma usage. For the

purposes of orienting popular trauma usage, this means that to generate a subjectively and intersubjectively meaningful trauma usage is to uphold the meaning structures that enable the social action to be comprehended as intended. Not only does such a requirement demand an adequate application of the knowledge at hand, the trauma use, but also it demands knowing and applying the adequate meaning structure in rejecting or joking about a trauma usage.

Berger and Luckmann (1967, p. 3) argue that typically everyday social members take their reality and knowledge for granted and that both reality and knowledge are dependent on social context. To apply this notion to the case of trauma is to say that formulating an experience as trauma (social action) means that members know the objective material and the subjective parameters for understanding trauma in socially intelligible and socially validated ways. The content that enables sense making is based on the pre-existing knowledge that members have collected through their lived experiences. This same content is also a basis for establishing an illegitimate rendering of trauma as noted in the above example.

“[W]hatever passes for “knowledge” in a society, regardless of the ultimate validity or invalidity (by whatever criteria)” (i.e. meeting authorized and principled classification criterion like the DSM-IV) requires developing an understanding about the “processes by which this is done in such a way that a taken-for-granted “reality” congeals for the man in the street” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 3). Different types of trauma usages in popular discourse are then not irrational disparate formulations that leave the concept of trauma empty, as advanced by *Fowler’s* (2008). Varieties of trauma usages are instead interpretively understandable on the basis of the form of reality they invoke for the everyday member for the purposes of living. For instance, in an article written by John Searles in *Cosmopolitan* (November, 1998, p. 162) entitled, ‘Mama trauma: Give your mom an emotional makeover’ states:

The relationship between any mother and her adult daughter can be tumultuous at times,” says Denise McGregor, author of *Mama Drama: Making Peace With the One Woman Who Can Push Your Buttons, Make You Cry, and Drive You Crazy* (St. Martin’s Press, 1998). “Every mother has her idiosyncrasies, but there are some common mother-daughter conflicts – she hates your boyfriend, she tries to manage your life—that happened to all of us.” Fortunately, says McGregor, you can defuse the drama with a few deft maneuvers. Below, we’ve dissected the three most common mama traumas and given you an action plan for each. So the next time your parents’ living room starts to feel like the set of *The Jerry Springer Show*, take a deep breath—and then take *Cosmo’s* advice.

In this case we can see that trauma is a taken-for-granted objectively real and subjectively meaningful experience in everyday life. It is a (Worldly or) shared understanding of lived experience that is intelligible among contemporary generic social members. As a socially sharable meaning context, trauma in this instance involves an expectation of reciprocity between social members. However, this taken-for-granted everyday usage highlights particular the knowledge necessary for seeing this occurrence as an intelligible instance of trauma talk.

Relying on the phenomenological advances of Berger and Luckmann (1967) we realize that inquiring about what people “know” as “reality” in their everyday lives requires analyzing “common-sense knowledge...that constitutes the fabric of meanings without which no society could exist” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 15). In this way, “(e)veryday life presents itself as a reality interpreted by men and subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 19). “[M]y relevance structures intersect with the relevance structures of others” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 45) and these structures are present within socially shared stock knowledge. “The world of everyday life is not only taken for granted as reality by the ordinary members of society in the subjectively meaningful conduct of their lives” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 19-20), it is also constructed by objectifying

meanings inherent in social interactions. As such “(c)onsciousness is always intentional; it always intends or is directed toward objects” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 20) since consciousness always involves an orientation to objects within the social world in which one is a part. Applying this idea to trauma then, we find a way of understanding trauma usages as meaningful *conscious* explications by rational actors who formulate a lived experience as trauma. In such cases, members are necessarily conscious of a material reality as well as a subjective reality dependent on one’s social location. (For instance, one who adopts the contemporary trauma theory approach embedded in: a natural science orientation, a principled psychoanalytic tradition, an everyday member positioned within the cultural imagery of American talk shows, or a combination thereof). Since “(d)ifferent objects present themselves to consciousness as constituents of different spheres of reality” and that “I am [as a social member] conscious of the world as consisting of multiple realities” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 21) social members understand that there is a plurality of perspectives, not one singular viewpoint or way of understanding and experiencing the world. Andrea Gibson (2011) highlights this awareness in relation to traumatic lived experience in her poem entitled, The Madness Vase. A pertinent section from this poem reads:

The nutritionist said I should eat root vegetables.
Said if I could get down thirteen turnips a day
I would be grounded, rooted.
Said my head would not keep flying away
to where the darkness lives.

The psychic told me my heart carries too much weight.
Said for twenty dollars she’d tell me what to do.
I handed her the twenty. She said, “Stop worrying, darling.
You will find a good man soon.”

The first psycho therapist told me to spend
three hours each day sitting in a dark closet
with my eyes closed and ears plugged.
I tried it once but couldn’t stop thinking...

The yogi told me to stretch everything but the truth.

Said to focus on the out breath. Said everyone finds happiness when they care more about what they give than what they get.

The pharmacist said, "Lexapro, Lamictal, Lithium, Xanax."

The doctor said an anti-psychotic might help me forget what the trauma said.

The trauma said, "Don't write these poems. Nobody wants to hear you cry about the grief inside your bones."

But my bones said, "Tyler Clementi jumped from the George Washington Bridge into the Hudson River convinced he was entirely alone."

My bones said, "Write the poems."

Through the awareness of multiple realities between contemporaries, a "tension of consciousness", like that exposed by Gibson (2011), manifests as an imposition of an urgent and pressing nature which forces an everyday member into a "wide-awake state if existing in and apprehending the reality of everyday life" that is "taken by me to be normal and self-evident...it constitutes my natural attitude" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 21). Accordingly, as announced by Gibson (2011), trauma is an "ordered reality" with "its phenomena ...prearranged in patterns that seem to be independent of my apprehension of them...the reality of everyday life appears already objectified, that is, constituted by an order of objects that have been designated as objects before my appearance on the scene" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 21-22). Through the presence of socially understood meanings surrounding my experiences the objectification of the phenomena is reinforced so that I recognize that my natural attitude is aligned with the natural attitude of other social members in that "I know that there is an ongoing correspondence between my meanings and their meanings in this world, that we share a common sense about its reality...because it refers to a world that is common to many men" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 23).

Since everyday life is taken for granted as reality, doubt is possible but suspended and additional verification is possible yet unnecessary. Existing within the natural attitude means that a member believes in the commonality of a shared reality and way of knowing. Without trouble that forces one to doubt or challenge shared understanding, a natural attitude toward life remains unproblematic, so much so, in fact, that even when the natural attitude is confronted with problems, one does not fully leave the routinized understanding of daily life (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 24). In such cases, members adopt a variety of common sense ways to naturalize problematic behaviours or make them sensible in the “common world of everyday life” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 25).

In the face of incongruence between the natural attitude and a lived subjective reality, like that exposed by Gibson (2011), or by the stated misuse in the popular media account above, there is an overarching province of meaning that provides for understanding of the experience at hand. “All finite provinces of meaning are characterized by a turning away of attention from the reality of everyday life” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 25). However, it is *through language* that the link to the everyday world is forged.

I can hardly believe that the rest of the world is just going on as it always has. The Mac’s Milk is still the hangout for the teenagers. The neighbourhood streets and houses look like they always have. My kids still fight as much as ever. It is hard to undergo so much and to have changed so much and then find that everything else is the same. (Clarke, 1985, p. 94)

In this testimonial, trauma creates an inability to assimilate oneself with the everyday reality that surrounds one. In this experience, the speaker does not recognize herself to be alien to the world, but instead recognizes the world as lacking intersubjectivity with her lived experience. She is unable to reconcile her deep expansive concern while in a state of trauma with the lack of concern experienced by other social members. Similarly, Stolorow states, “I was certain that the horizons of their experience

could never encompass mine, and this conviction was the source of my alienation and solitude, of the unbridgeable gulf separating me from their understanding. It is not just that the traumatized ones and the normal live in different worlds; it is that these discrepant worlds are felt to be essentially and ineradicably incommensurable” (2007, p. 15).

In these instances of popular trauma talk, trauma *is* a conscious awareness of the possibilities for being that are intersubjectively knowable and subjectively meaningful (i.e. intelligible). Through this popular talk the gap that can exist between different understandings that stem from differing lifeworlds is vivid. Additionally, these instances highlight an expectation of intersubjective understanding of the lived experienced through the use of language, even if the lived experience is outside of that of another social member. This expectation of intersubjective meaning reached by another competent social member supports Schutz’s (1967) argument that intersubjectivity is a fundamental condition for being human. “This felt incommensurability, in turn, contributes to the sense of alienation and estrangement from other human beings that typically haunts the traumatized person. Torn from the communal fabric of being-in-time, trauma remains insulated from human dialogue” (Stolorow, 2007, p. 20). According to Stolorow (2007) “the nature of this incommensurability” is a “radical decontextualization serving vital restorative and defensive functions” (p. 15). Stolorow (2007) immediately seeks technical solution from within his pathologizing orientation. But if we were to apply the work of Berger and Luckmann (1967), we can acknowledge that everyday members do experience discrepancies between their stock knowledge and experience within the lifeworld. They argue that in such cases members distort their experiences in order to reorient themselves back into a paramount reality available to other social members and they do so using meaningful language structures. Relating back to the theorizing of de Certeau (1984), everyday members relate to popular trauma talk by poaching and then modifying in order to establish their own relationality to what is read.

Berger and Luckmann (1967) note that this reintegration back into everyday lived experience through the use of socially understandable language is a process whereby the original experience is distorted in order to fall back in alignment with the “paramount reality of everyday life” (p. 26). Since language is an essential constituent of the reality of everyday life (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 40), the importance of language use for Stolorow (2007), as it was for Gibson (2011), is highlighted in trauma experiences as it provides a method for everyday members to re-enter the everyday world. That is to reorient to a paramount reality by way of using socially meaningful language structures (Berger & Luckmann, 1967).

Berger and Luckmann (1967, p. 38) note that language is rooted in everyday life and, because it is shared, is recognizable as having an objectively real quality. “I objectivate my own being by means of language, my own being becomes massively and continuously available to myself at the same time that it is so available to him” so that “language makes “more real” my subjectivity not only to my conversation partner but also to myself” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 38). Different from Caruth (1996) and Rogers (2007), trauma usages are available to everyday members beyond the scope of expert discourse because popularized ways of talking about trauma are available to make even the most seemingly intersubjectively unavailable content available to other competent members. “For instance, I can interpret the meaning of a dream by integrating it linguistically within the order of everyday life...The dream is now meaningful in terms of the reality of everyday life rather than its own discrete reality” so that “both spheres of reality...are “located” in one reality, but “refer” to another” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 41). From the experiences outlined by Stolorow we see trauma as a resource for meaningfully communicating a felt intersubjective distance. This distance illustrates collisions between differing spheres of reality. The inclusiveness of multiple spheres of reality, not just one, is characteristic of the province of human practice. It is a foundational feature of social life from within the province of human practice. Stolorow’s work shows that in the course of everyday living social members can be

understood as having a way of being that provides for holding, at the same time, multiple ways of understanding their Worldly confrontations. These multiple opportunities for a primary language experience with popular trauma talk in the course of reading highlights this fundamental feature of social living. Everyday living involves a multitude of varied and complex realities do not provide for the possibility of a singular structural form or technical meaning for one's Worldly experiences.

Confirming work of Deetz (1973, p. 42) this work shows that asking for singular knowing of "what is the meaning of the word trauma in popular trauma talk?" would be an untenable task. On the other hand, asking "what is popular trauma talk?" is a fruitful concern for social inquiry. Such a question seeks to understand how the full scope of trauma talk is available for a primary language experience given the particular Worldly existence from within which the popular trauma talk reading happens. Unlike the latter, the former question forces a relation to language that is representational (Deetz, 1973, p. 42). Understanding the particular orientation that grounds sense making when doing a popular trauma reading means that the task of this inquiry is to recover the grounds of social living that enable the disclosure and manifesting of trauma as some *thing* in the course of the everyday practice of reading. How are popular trauma talk occurrences available as concrete possibilities for living in the course of reading? How is the disparate character of popular trauma talk unproblematically sensical among everyday members engaged in the everyday practice of reading? All are primary language experiences that are brought out of their self-evident concealment when analyzed in operation (Deetz, 1973, p. 42).

Chapter 3: The Popularizing of Trauma by Social Actors

McNally (2005) too contends that contemporary trauma formulations are often loose, undisciplined and incoherent. This contention is drawn from comparisons with previous empirically informed classification parameters, as when clinical psychologists earmarked trauma as a *concept* in guiding disciplinary classification schemes. McNally (2005) finds a reliance on subjective experience to be at the heart of the growth of trauma formulations in mainstream culture. When everyday members practically make use of the word 'trauma' in the course of reading, their meaning making lies outside of contemporary trauma theory horizon. The requisite experience of a catastrophic event is absent (Fowler's, 2008). McNally argues that mental health professionals do the same because they are obligated to uphold diagnostic criteria:

Many experiences now being adduced as traumatic, especially in the courtroom – fender benders, overhearing obnoxious sexual jokes in the workplace, being fired – are unlikely to produce the same kind of psychobiological consequences as the horrors endured by Engdahl's POW subjects. To be sure, many people will develop PTSD following far less traumatic experiences than those suffered by the men who fought in the Pacific. Nevertheless, the more we broaden the category of traumatic stressors, the less credibly we can assign causal significance to a given stressor itself and the more weight we must place on personal vulnerability factors. And shifting the causal emphasis away from the event and toward the survivor undercuts the rationale for having a diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder in the DSM in the first place. The more we identify non-catastrophic events as stressors deemed capable of producing PTSD, the less likely it is that we will ever discover any common mechanisms that mediate PTSD symptoms. (2005, p. 280)

In *Remembering Trauma* (2005), McNally sets out to uncover 'what counts as trauma' in contemporary mental health practice. McNally (2005) is particularly troubled by clinicians who draw conclusions about a traumatic experience without a measurably sufficient cause. McNally isolates three particular evaluation measures currently being applied in the making of contemporary clinical trauma formulations. Included are considerations of (1) an objective event, (2) subjective meanings attached to the event by individuals or groups, and (3) the emotional reaction of a person or group (McNally, 2005: 78). In working through his concern, McNally asks why statistical data about Vietnam veterans show that few develop PTSD, despite having endured torture experiences objectively recognized as traumatic (2005, p. 78). Similarly, why do epidemiological studies show that only a small portion of Americans with histories of traumatic experience, such as rape, physical assault and accident, develop a maladaptive psychic reaction (McNally, 2005, p. 87)? Why is it that a subjective experience such as sexual harassment in the workplace is considered a traumatic event, when such classification is outside of the diagnostic guidelines set forth in the *American Psychiatric Association Diagnostic Statistical Manual* (McNally, 2005, p. 78-79)? McNally places the blame for such empirically unfounded formulations in the hands of clinicians. They have categorized events as sufficiently catastrophic on the basis of subjective experience, rather than on the basis of other empirically valid and reliable diagnostic criteria.

McNally narrows the cause of this 'mistaken extension' of a trauma diagnosis to (1) 'conceptual bracket creep' (2005, p. 97) that fosters an overreliance on subjective interpretation; and (2) undisciplined categorization by specialized experts in a peaceful society. For McNally, using someone's subjective interpretation of their experience of an event to determine its trauma-inducing potency explains why rates of maladaptive psychic responses to catastrophic events are disproportionately lesser than formulated trauma exposures. Such determinations thus contribute to the popularization of

trauma in mainstream society. “If what counts as a traumatic stressor is broadened, it is little surprise that rates of PTSD are low relative to rates of trauma exposure” (McNally, 2005, p. 97).

From McNally’s perspective, trauma is not whatever traumatizes a person. *Feeling* traumatized, by way of subjective interpretation, results in an inauthentic rendering of the experience of trauma. Ultimately, it removes science from trauma work in the psychological profession generally. According to McNally (2005), the cost paid for this conceptual bracket creep is twofold. First, the dilution of the notion of trauma in professional psychiatric practice has created a medicalization of otherwise normal human reactions to adversity. Second, a movement away from clinical psychology as a formidable and recognizable empirical science renders a lack of precision and certainty in establishing trauma formulations. Broadly, through this critique, McNally (2005) is levying a professional concern: the imprecision of popular usage has infected the mental health field, making distinguishing between mental health experts and everyday members problematic.

If we hold McNally’s claim as valid and reliable, that there are more trauma diagnoses that are not empirically founded and are thus not diagnostically sound, we are left asking why bracket creep is happening. From McNally’s (2009) perspective, clinical practice appears to be in disarray, with conflicting criteria for observing trauma. Disparate trauma formulations signal a lack of structure to trauma as a concept. McNally sees this disarray as the result of insufficient methodological rigour. Clinical formulations, like popular ones, exhibit an unhelpful inflation that conflicts with the conceptual structure of the isness of trauma.

According to McNally, the extension of instances of trauma usages is localizable to (1) social influences and (2) classification changes to diagnostic criteria. Considering the influence of definitional changes first, McNally (2009) argues that guidelines for determining trauma have changed considerably as a result of ongoing revisions to the American Psychological Association’s *Diagnostic Statistical Manual*

of Mental Disorders (DSM). Providing the standard professional diagnostic criteria, the DSM defines what a professionally intelligible instance of trauma is, along with its associative symptomology.

McNally highlights how changes to the diagnostic manual have influenced the prevalence of trauma when stating:

Hence, the DSM-IV-TR concept of trauma brackets three kinds of people as trauma survivors. One group consists of direct recipients of serious threat or harm, such as combat veterans or rape victims. A second group includes personal witnesses of trauma experienced by others, such as bystanders present at a drive-by shooting. The third group, new in DSM-IV, includes people who are “confronted with” information about threats to others, such as horrified viewers of television coverage of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. ...Thanks to this conceptual bracket creep in the definition of trauma. ...nearly everyone in America counts as a trauma survivor today. (2009, p. 597)

McNally (2009) particularly objects to the use of trauma removed from a sense of catastrophe. In such instances, the sufferer experiences intense helplessness, fear, or horror. Expanding on this objection, he notes that the latest revision to the manual (DSM-5) defines trauma as an “exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury or sexual violence.” The definition no longer requires that the precipitating event arise from its original requisite measurement of catastrophe (i.e. fear, helplessness, horror) (DSM-5, 2013, p. 271). Exposures recognized as potentially traumatic now include precipitating events that involve the following:

1. Directly experiencing the traumatic event(s).
2. Witnessing, in person, the event(s) as it occurred to others.

3. Learning that the traumatic event(s) occurred to a close family member or close friend. In cases of actual or threatened death of a family member or friend, the event(s) must have been violent or accidental.
4. Experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event(s) (e.g., first responders collecting human remains; police officers repeatedly exposed to details of child abuse).

Note: Criterion A4 does not apply to exposure through electronic media, television, movies, or pictures, unless this exposure is work related. (DSM-5, 2013, p. 271)

Similar to our findings in everyday trauma talk, the DSM-5 recognizes a high variability in an individual's potential reaction to 'traumatic and stress related events'. The DSM-5 directs (and thus orients) clinical mental health experts to recognize the possibility of trauma formulations in instances where symptoms are directly or indirectly observable. The manual thus makes a trauma formulation available to clinicians when a subject exhibits fear or anxiety or when these same symptoms may be absent or negligible. As a result of great variability in trauma symptoms, the latest version of the DSM contains for the first time a distinct section called, *Trauma- and Stressor- Related Disorders* (2013, p. 265-290). "Because of these variable expressions of clinical distress following exposure to catastrophic or aversive events, the aforementioned disorders have been grouped under a separate category: *trauma- and stress- related disorders*" (APA, DSM-5, 2013, p. 265). "Trauma- and stressor- related disorders include disorders in which exposure to a traumatic or stressful event is listed explicitly as a diagnostic criterion" (DSM-5, 2013, p. 265). DSM-5 now includes a category of 'other' that

applies to presentations in which symptoms characteristic of a trauma- and stressor- related disorder that cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other

important areas of functioning predominate but do not meet the full criteria for any of the disorders. (DSM-5, 2013, p. 289)

[this] category is used in situations in which the clinician chooses not to specify the reason that the criteria are not met for a specific trauma-and stressor-related disorder, and includes presentations in which there is insufficient information to make a more specific diagnosis (e.g., in emergency room settings). (Emphasis in the original, DSM-5, 2013, p. 290)

According to McNally (2005), such an expansion in trauma diagnosis makes the once rare experience of trauma common. In addition to bracket creep, McNally contends that social influences on the profession have led to undisciplined and unfounded trauma formulations. On this point McNally states:

One unintended consequence of peace and prosperity is a liberalized definition of what counts as a traumatic stressor. The threshold for classifying an experience as traumatic is lower when times are good. In the absence of catastrophic stressors such as war, specialists in traumatic stress turn their attention elsewhere, discovering new sources of victims of hitherto unrecognized trauma. (2005, p. 279)

McNally (2005) ultimately challenges the clinician as trauma expert. Standards of practice are empirically unfounded and thus professionally irresponsible, because they include formulations that lay outside of sufficiently catastrophic precipitating events. By recognizing clinicians and their standards of practice as being easily swayed by societal influences, McNally consequently conceives of clinicians and their subjects as contemporary social members insatiably interested in the experience of trauma. This view characterizes clinical professionals as gatekeepers whose role is to rely on empirically informed and objective criterion to weed out the tendency of some everyday members to seek out unsubstantiated diagnoses for underserved gain. The social responsibility of the diagnosing clinician is to spot such

illegitimate cases while fulfilling expectations of 'good' professional practice. By removing or delegitimizing trauma as a resource for social actors to use and apply to explain social life at will, the clinical practitioner is professionally obligated to restrict observances of trauma. The possibility of a recognized and credible trauma formulation is thus limited to those instances in which a traumatizing event is professionally endorsed.

Interestingly, like McNally (2005) and *Fowler's* (2008), social actors *do* show disagreement with some instances represented in major news dailies. Through their problematizing of trauma in popular discourse, social members signal that there *are* standards in place for an intelligible trauma formulation. For instance, we can consider the following newspaper account as an example of an unintelligible trauma formulation. Interestingly, the popular trauma talk example below was rejected on the basis of a contradiction with subjective lived experiences.

Dr. Oliver Robinow's statement that cross-dressing is the result of trauma such as divorce or abuse in early childhood is by no means universally accepted. There is widespread disagreement over the causes of heterosexual cross-dressing. (Editorial. Anonymous, January 11, 2011, p. A.14)

To emphasize, McNally's work isolates two critical factors. First, the concept of trauma has been broadened (and therefore popularized) beyond its structural scientific classification. Second, trauma is popular in contemporary society because it is wrongly categorized by undisciplined experts living in a largely peaceful society who are influenced by social pressures and a propensity to apply their specialized skills. The popularization of trauma ultimately exists as a result of clinicians' lack of discipline and overreliance on subjective experience. Guiding criteria are now less empirically informed; trauma-inducing events are now viewed with much less precision.

To be clear, the critique made here against McNally's contentions is that his position misses considerations of the foundations of the social. From the position developed in this inquiry, understanding the popularity of trauma in contemporary culture requires a listening orientation rather than an orientation of disinterest to how social members use the term from within the province of human practice. To do so we are required to develop our relation to language. I maintain that a relation to the world is manifest when humans use language to render a conscious awareness of how they understand themselves, others and the world in which they are immersed. An intelligible trauma formulation, according to our orientation, is not an abstraction. It cannot be grasped as a concept because language is a primary experience. However, language can do the work of categorization, as is the case with McNally's clinicians who are guided by APA doctrine, for example. In such cases, phenomenological hermeneutics would be useful to understand the categorizing of things in the world through language before the act of categorization takes place. Language occurs at the point of the first appearance of the possibility for categorizing. It offers a way to exist in the world in one's relational context. It is an elemental aspect of living. From the point of view of phenomenological hermeneutics (Palmer, 1969 & Deetz, 1973), McNally's theorizing about the popularization of trauma in contemporary society is a secondary, rather than a primary, approach to language. It is secondary because it involves the objectifying, or the pulling away from, what is said. In its attempt to apply an abstract overarching conceptual scheme, it removes itself from lived experience, rendering not the experience but the technical application of a concept. Orientations such as McNally's and *Fowler's* deal with "nothing resembling the experiential reality of ongoing discourse" (Deetz, 1973, p. 42). Embedded within each of these orientations is a problem about which a particular question is provoked and posed. Each seeks to know something objective and universal from which the meaning of trauma can be either confirmed or rejected, based on the presence or absence of certain features. In contrast, we seek not to ask an objectifying question such as 'What counts as trauma?' Rather, our concern instead is more akin to

asking 'What particular orientation for being in the world provides for these possibilities?' What are the contemporary grounds that provide for the possibilities for living that are opened up when a conscious awareness of a lived experience of trauma is manifest and disclosed in and through language?

Consciousness produces a relational context by which one establishes trauma talk as an intelligible experience from within a particular form of existence in the world. Such awareness is not a reflexive accomplishment, nor is it the result of reflexivity. Consciousness is rather a concealed and taken-for-granted knowing of something in a particular way. It becomes situationally manifest in a relational context in and through language. Available to the inquirer in what is said about the trauma is the disclosure of the context of living. In the case of popular trauma formulations in newspapers, the relational context is developed in and through the modality of reading.

We are most interested in 'primary' language as distinguished from the kind of secondary language that is reflected in the work of abstraction or conceptualization. Our deep concern rests with the lived experience of language (Deetz, 1973). By virtue of our phenomenological hermeneutics orientation, language cannot be an object. In the course of everyday living, the primary nature of language is as a 'non-object.' Given that, "primary language experience shows itself only in operation" in the "experiential world" (Deetz, 1973, p. 42-43).

In order to take seriously McNally's (2005) second critical factor, namely an overreliance on subjective experience, we are best served by turning to Durkheim's (1951) theorizing on suicide. Through an engagement with this work, we can get a better grasp of what McNally contends is an overreliance on untrustworthy subjective experience. We now turn to Durkheim in order to better understand the implications of subjective interpretation, and how it may be used to establish the kind of empirically founded claim that McNally requires (2005).

Popularity of as a Result of Imprecision

In *Suicide* (1951), Durkheim notes that the term 'suicide' is prevalent in popular talk. He posits that, since the term 'suicide' was widely used in the course of everyday life, it would seem that "its sense is universally known and that definition is superfluous" (Durkheim, 1951, p. 41). In speaking of the popular talk of suicide among social actors, Durkheim states:

Not only is their meaning so indefinite as to vary, from case to case, with the needs of argument, but, as the classification from which they derive is not analytic, but merely translates the confused impressions of the crowd, categories of very different sorts of fact are indistinctly combined under the same heading, or similar realities are differently named. (1951, p. 41)

Similar to what *Fowler's* (2008) and McNally (2005) contend, Durkheim (1951) presents popular suicide talk as lacking the precision necessary to provide 'true' or accurate formulations of the phenomenon. For *Fowler's* (2008), 'true' trauma formulations are those that stay close to their traditional meaning. For McNally (2005; 2009), 'true' trauma formulations are those that rely mainly on assessments grounded in empirically informed evidence, determined by objective scientific criteria, and overseen by a guiding professional body. The subjective experience of social actors is dismissed outright. For Durkheim (1951), 'true' suicide formulations are those stemming from empirically observable invariant natural characteristics that affirm the characteristic nature of the social phenomena. From Durkheim's perspective, the role of the social scientist is "to establish a category of objects permitting this classification, which are objectively established, that is, correspond to a definite aspect of things" (Durkheim, 1951, p. 42). Because, "if we [social inquirers] follow common use, we risk distinguishing what should be combined, or combining what should be distinguished, thus mistaking the real affinities of things, and accordingly misapprehending their nature. Only comparison affords explanation" (Durkheim, 1951, p. 41).

Durkheim found that suicide is formulated among social members with great variability. The social scientist's reliance on the myriad of meanings invoked in casual or popular suicide talk risks misunderstanding the phenomenon. The social inquirer seeking to understand suicide must work deliberately to further define its invariable characteristics. According to Durkheim, then, the work of the social scientist is markedly different from that of the social member who formulates suicide in their talk. Social scientists have as their goal the isolating of the invariant characteristics of a social phenomenon, and then the comparing of these characteristics across time and social collectives.

A scientific investigation can thus be achieved only if it deals with comparable facts, and it is the more likely to succeed the more certainly it has combined all those that can be usefully compared. But these natural affinities of entities cannot be made clear safely by such superficial examination as produces ordinary terminology; and so the scholar cannot take as the subject of his research roughly assembled groups of facts corresponding to words of common usage. He himself must establish the groups he wishes to study in order to give them homogeneity and the specific meaning necessary for them to be susceptible of scientific treatment. (Durkheim, 1951, p. 41)

Like McNally (2005), Durkheim problematizes subjective interpretation in determining the meaning of a socially prevalent term. In relation to suicide, Durkheim notes that "the intrinsic nature of the acts so resulting is unimportant" (1951, p. 42). A social analysis of suicide necessarily requires that the inquirer not seek to find the intent of the act because "intent is too intimate a thing to be more than approximately interpreted by another." Such insight "even escapes self-observation," and thus a sense of certainty embedded in the scientific paradigm (1951, p. 43). Suicide defined by the motive and intent of a person, Durkheim (1951) argues, relies on explaining acts on the basis of internalized intentions that are unavailable to empirical observation. Such a basis for understanding a social situation relies on explanations of "petty feelings or blind routine by generous passions or lofty considerations" (Durkheim,

1951, p. 43). The consequence is irrelevant analysis, since “an act cannot be defined by the end sought by the actor, for an identical system of behavior may be adjustable to too many different ends without altering its nature” (1951, p. 43).

“The diversity of motives capable of actuating these resolves can give rise only to secondary differences” (Durkheim, 1951, p. 44). When suicide is studied in its relative correlation to social conditions over time, it is then “itself a new fact *sui generis*” (Durkheim, 1951, p. 46).

At each moment of its history, therefore, each society has a definite aptitude for suicide. The relative intensity of this aptitude is measured by taking the proportion between the total number of voluntary deaths and the population of every age and sex. We will call this numerical datum the rate of mortality through suicide, characteristic of the society under consideration. It is generally calculated in proportion to a million or a hundred thousand inhabitants. (Durkheim, 1951, p. 48)

Durkheim finds that “the suicide-rate, while showing only slight annual changes, varies according to society by doubling, tripling, quadrupling, and even more” (1951, p. 50). From this formulation Durkheim concludes that “the suicide-rate is therefore a factual order, unified and definite, as is shown by both its permanence and its variability” (1951, p. 51).

In short, these statistical data express the suicidal tendency with which each society is collectively afflicted. We need not state the actual nature of this tendency, whether it is a state *sui generis* of the collective mind, with its own reality, or represents merely a sum of individual states and instead find that each society is predisposed to contribute a definite quota of voluntary deaths. This predisposition may therefore be the subject of a special study belonging to sociology. (Durkheim, 1951, p. 51)

Durkheim sees social actors as using terms in loose and incoherent ways. So it is best not to rely on that use for understanding.

Problematically, the positions of *Fowler's* (2008), McNally (2005) and Durkheim (1951) do not provide us with a way to get closer to our main goal of understanding the possibilities opened up by a trauma formulation in a reading relation in the course of everyday living. Although these researchers do provide us with a way of understanding the popularization of trauma in contemporary society, each of these positions differs from our primary questions about of the relational context of trauma for everyday members in the course of their daily lives. These positions prevent us from developing an understanding of trauma formulations as an experience lived in and through language. Because they prevent us from recognizing the relational context of trauma formulations, they prevent us from collecting the grounds from within which popular trauma talk is meaningful in its practical use. Some alternative to understanding a relational experience in the contemporary social world remains to be discovered. Such questions are unanswerable within the positions of *Fowler's* (2008), McNally (2005) and Durkheim (1951) since each take the position of recognizing the role of listening to popular trauma talk as a way of understanding the phenomenon of popularization as unproductive. To get closer to a way of understanding the orientation of social actors to a meaningful relational world we now turn to the theorizing of Max Weber.

The Necessity of Subjective Meaning for Instances of Social Action

Unlike Durkheim (1951), Weber argues that social science cannot involve a search for law-like regularities. The social phenomena under study are qualitatively different. This fact rules out the option of a natural science model for studying society. The qualitative difference in subject matter derives from the fact that an individual's social actions are based on relevant beliefs and values. Developing an adequate meaning of social phenomenon requires an understanding of how these values and subjective

motivations provide a basis for social action. From this perspective, then, Durkheim's notion of 'social facts' or McNally's (2005) diagnostic measures (as social actions) are forms of human conduct that are oriented to behaviour as opposed to some objective phenomena.

Weber's difference from Durkheim and McNally, is found in his commitment to deal directly with a subjective understanding of social actions as real/concrete and rational. Actions are rational in the sense that they are performed with intention. Rational social actors are those that mean to say what they say and do what they do, even if their purposes and processes of doing are unknown. For social action theory, rational intention is the cornerstone of human action and interaction. Explaining a social phenomenon, then, requires recognizing and making sense of context (Munch, 1975, p. 18).

Sociology (in the sense in which this highly ambiguous word is used here) is a science concerning itself with the interpretive understanding of social action and thereby with a causal explanation of its course and consequences. We shall speak of "action" insofar as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to his behavior – be it overt or covert, omission or acquiescence. Action is "social" insofar as its subjective meaning takes account of the behaviour of others and is thereby oriented in its course. (Weber, 1968, p. 4)

Again differing from Durkheim, Weber (1968) demands that sociology be a "science", but a science of a particular type. As human conduct that is meaningfully oriented to the past, present and/or future behaviour of others, social action is the content of interpretive sociology and its prime purpose is the collecting of its preconditions. What are the preconditions providing the context for the social action of trauma formulation? What are the relevant cultural conditions that exist in order for a trauma usage to be socially meaningful? Preconditions include (1) the rational assignment of meaning to one's actions and (2) these meanings as a rational explanation for behaviour, given the cultural context within which the conduct occurs. To put it another way, if any human conduct (like a trauma usage) is to be

recognized as sensible to both one's self and others in the social context of everyday life, analyses of social action must seek to understand how behaviours are oriented or organized.

Given the basis of individual social action as being motivated, intentional, and rational, the social scientist concerned with interpretive understanding must take into account the aims of the competent social actor who is oriented toward a common-sense meaning in relation to other competent social members. "Action in the sense of subjectively understandable orientation of behavior exists only as the behavior of one or more *individual* human beings" (Weber, 1968, p. 13). Applying Weber's work to communication, Munch (1975) states:

Comprehending the intended sense of an action, therefore, is in no way different from comprehending the intended sense of a spoken statement. The "sense" of a statement is to serve as a meaningful communication (and therefore qualify as a "social action" in Weber's sense), it must be *Sinnhaft adäquat*, that is, the speaker must give it the "proper" or "correct" form according to the sense that the speaker intends to communicate, and in language that is comprehensible to the audience. (p. 18)

Munch (1975) argues that socially mediated communication, such as our trauma usage, *is* social action as outlined by Weber's theory of social action. As such, the task of the social scientist is to interpret the meaning attached to the social act. According to Weber (1968), meaning attached to social actions is of two kinds: (1) an actual existing meaning given the concrete case of a particular actor, or (2) the average or approximate meaning attributed to a hypothetical actor in a given type of social action (p. 4). In other words, attached to all social action is both subjective and intersubjective meaning. Unlike Durkheim, Weber contends that an objectively correct meaning (i.e. a 'real' representation of trauma) does not exist. The meaning of an action depends on the situation of the actor and the meaning likely to be conceived by, or attributed to, an anonymous social other. Social action is therefore not based on an instinctual reaction to one's surroundings. Nor is its basis to be found in

some empirical 'objectively correct' meaning (such as McNally's notion of 'real' representations of trauma). Instead, its basis derives from the subjective meaning that a social member attaches to his or her behaviour, while at the same time taking into account the behaviour of other social members within a particular culture, thereby making it oriented in its course.

Weber's work demonstrates that the intention, or subjective meaning, of social actors does not require a focus on inner states of the mind. Human conduct as rational social action provides social inquirers with a way to take subjective meaning seriously. Weber's theorizing allows us to move beyond McNally's (2005) take on subjective meaning as problematic, and beyond Durkheim's dismissal of subjective meaning in social science inquiries. With subjective meaning as overt behaviour that manifests itself in relation to cultural context, Weber recognizes that subjective meaning is the basis of human conduct, and that meaning is an explanation of that conduct. The frame for social action is generated through the development of subjective meaning within one's relational context, *verstehen*.

Weber argues that in cases where there is a lack of experience or knowledge on the part of the social actor, a personal experience is not a prerequisite for understanding the meaning that is being conveyed in the social action. "“One need not have been Caesar in order to understand Caesar.” ... Understandable and non-understandable components of a process are often intermingled and bound together” (Weber, 1968, p. 5). Applying this observation to the case of popularized trauma usage in mainstream culture, one need not have experienced trauma to understand trauma formulations. One need not be a mental health clinician or an expert in contemporary trauma theory. What is necessary, however, is a “basis for certainty in understanding.” That understanding can come from the rational purpose for the action or emotional context of the action. The rationality of action comes from a developed understanding of the “intended context of meaning” (Weber, 1968, p. 5). Engaging social action (such as the creation of a socially recognizable trauma formulation), therefore, requires an expectation of certainty that one's action and intention will be interpreted and understood by other

social members. Should a member be unable to communicate their actions in ways intelligible to other competent social members, the actions of that member will lack sufficient meaning and will not render the member a sense of social competence and legitimacy among the collective.

Through the work of Max Weber we can understand trauma usages that are actively ‘consumed’ by social members in the course of reading, as social action. Weber was largely concerned with developing a theory of human social action and establishing an interpretive method for understanding it. Generally, Weber questioned how and why social actors initiated actions that were meaningful both to themselves and to others in culturally relevant ways while taking the behaviour of others into account. In the research completed by Fassin and Rechtman (2004), we find theorizing about the phenomenon of the popularization of trauma that takes up Weber’s contentions and therefore differs from the orientation of McNally (2009) and *Fowler’s* (2008). Yet it, too, as we will see, is limited in its understanding of the inseparable connection between language and lived experience.

Popularity of Trauma as a Functional Communication Tool

In, *The empire of trauma: An inquiry into the condition of victimhood* (2004) Fassin and Rechtman seek to find the interpretive meaning of trauma in mainstream culture. Differing from the standard of the traditional approach to the meaning of words or the clinical practitioner, Fassin and Rechtman (2004) propose to use segments of everyday usage in relation to social events in order to understand the emergent and fluid role of trauma as a concept in social life. Fassin and Rechtman (2004) contend that the popularization of trauma in modern social life signals a ‘spirit of the age’: trauma “speaks to us of our era – the spirit of our age, we might say. It expresses a range of the concerns, values, and expectations of this era” (Fassin & Rechtman, 2004, p. 277). They contend that the modern use of the concept of trauma “has given us this unprecedented ability to talk about – and

hence to experience – the violence of the world” (Fassin & Rechtman, 2004, p. 277). Let’s consider their claim.

Fassin and Rechtman (2004) argue that trauma is neither an objective clinical category nor is it a self-evident one. They concede that although clinical psychology may have initiated the concept of trauma, its contemporary formulation is more closely connected to the moral economy of a given society than it is to any particular clinical understanding. “Trauma enjoys its current status more as a moral than as a psychological category... and it confers a form of social recognition before it is ever validated by any psychologist or psychiatrist.” Therefore, “trauma today is a moral judgement” (Fassin & Rechtman, 2004, p. 284). Intelligible trauma formulations affirm contemporary organizing social structures. These social inquirers note that this primary concern does not rest on detailing what is or is not a justifiable instance of trauma. To do so “merely adds to the moral economy when drawing up an honor roll of victims” (Fassin & Rechtman, 2004, p. 278). They argue instead that what is needed is to study how categories are constructed and used, how representations describe and transform reality, and how practices are justified on the basis of these concepts (Fassin & Rechtman, 2004, p. 277-278).

Fassin and Rechtman (2004, p. 281) posit that at first glance trauma is a language that appears to be neutral and universal in establishing victimhood. As a commonly used tool in the perceived pursuit of justice, trauma is a concept that is applied purposefully when establishing and reinforcing the notion of the victim in contemporary society (2009, p. 279). As a social category, trauma is constructed and applied in ways that both describe and transform reality. Since trauma provides a way of reading and interpreting violence and misfortune in contemporary society, the use of this lens has direct consequences for the social world and the moral economy of a society (Fassin & Rechtman, 2004, p. 277-278). Fassin and Rechtman’s (2004) case study work leads them to claim that the socially motivated character of trauma as a concept involves social members motivated to establish and legitimize their perceived rights rather than seeking care as a psychological patient. From this particular

reading, trauma is a resource for producing and reproducing legitimate victims. For instance, when leveraged by an accident victim, trauma is a lens through which compensation can be viewed as legitimate and calculable (Fassin & Rechtman, 2004). When taken on by social members embattled in political war, trauma is a concept leveraged to generate public support for one's cause (Fassin & Rechtman, 2004). When activated by asylum seekers, the concept of trauma is used to gain recognition of one's persecution in order to legitimize their claim for refuge (Fassin & Rechtman, 2004).

Our exposure to popularized trauma formulations up to this point has given us ample reason to support Fassin and Rechtman's (2004) contention that trauma's prevalence in modern society reflects something about the spirit of our age. I am unable to agree with Fassin and Rechtman's (2004) conclusion, however, that trauma as a concept is the empirical way that social members problematize and legitimize moral responsibility. A benefit of Fassin and Rechtman's (2004) inquiry is found in their search for an interpretive understanding of trauma use in contemporary culture. But meaningful popularized trauma talk in Canadian mainstream culture does *not* require an experience of noteworthy catastrophe or violence. In this omission, their theorizing is unable to account for the fullness of contemporary use. As we have seen, the popularity of trauma includes not only disparate and scattered talk formulated as possible for an intelligible trauma talk occurrence, but also has been shown to be a term that is seemingly borderless. When seemingly any instance of a trauma use is available for an intelligible reading as the possibility for a trauma reading experience in the everyday lifeworld, it is difficult to collect the grounds for intelligible, taken-for-granted, sense making in popular trauma discourse. Researchers into this phenomenon have, up to this point, been unable to show how popular trauma talk is intelligible in everyday life.

While their conclusion does fit well with the select case studies they present (asylum seekers, accident victims, and participants on both sides of a political war), it is not suited to the everyday ways that trauma is used as a concept in popular culture. This unsuitability has consequences for their

theorizing about the prevalence of trauma in society. Fassin and Rechtman (2004) claim that they are not concerned to support the differentiation of what does or does not count as trauma in a society. To do so would further contribute to the moral economy they are setting out to critique. However, their deliberate selection of particularly violent case studies privileges particular experiences and conceals other possibilities. Much of the popularized usage among contemporaries remains invisible and irrelevant through their approach and understanding. We arrive at a problematic conclusion. We have seen that trauma is omni-present and omni-relevant in mainstream culture. Yet, understanding the relevance of all forms of meaningful usage from within the context of living is necessary before we can draw practical conclusions about the role of trauma in modern social life. Second, their advance of trauma as a concept prevents us from recognizing everyday trauma talk among social actors as instances of conscious awareness of possibilities for a lived experience within a particular form of living. Third, Fassin and Rechtman's work revolves around a fundamental understanding of language as a functional communication tool that is technically applied and actively used among social members. In their work, trauma is a word, a shared communication code that reflects and reinforces shared understanding of good and evil, right and wrong, in a society. Trauma is a communication code that when activated functions to establish victimhood by providing for a shared understanding of ethics and morality. Like McNally (2007) and Fowler's (2008), Fassin and Rechtman's inquiry into the social phenomenon of the popularization of trauma in mainstream culture is rooted in an objectifying approach to language. Rather than taking on language as a primary experience (an inseparable connection between language and one's relational existence) through which experience is made consciously aware to one's self and to others, these social researchers see trauma as a communication tool necessary for particular organized social functioning, which, in their case, is the functioning of the moral economy. Let's consider this marked difference more closely. Let's consider particularly the difference between a secondary approach to language and language as a primary experience that happens in the course of living.

By understanding trauma as a functional communication tool, Fassin and Rechtman (2004) assume that words are applied by speakers and that the application of words in communication is produced and accomplished on the basis of a knowledge of the meaning of a word. Words are considered to have bound within them (like the *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* example) an order to naming that is shared and is agreed upon by competent social actors within a culture. When a word is used there is a transfer of this code of meaning to the listener. This code is shared and held in common with the listener, who holds to similar codes concerning the meaning of the word used (i.e. the three options for defining the word trauma). Through speaking by using words that are comprised of similarly shared meanings available between the speaking and listening social actors, language provides for a shared meaning exchange that is productive. Productive, for Fassin and Rechtman (2004) means that the codes embedded within trauma talk in contemporary language use are seen to constitute and reinforce a basis for determining the boundaries between good and evil, and between what is traumatic and what is not. Functionally the boundary of the word trauma (i.e. what trauma means) works to constitute and reinforce a basis for distinguishing socially legitimate instances of victimhood from illegitimate ones.

Beyond a Communication Tool: Popular Trauma Talk and a Phenomenological Hermeneutic Approach to Language

In summary, phenomenological hermeneutics argues that such an understanding of language as being derivative of, and secondary to, the primary function of language. Seeing words in their first instance as codes invested in shared (moral) meaning is to dismiss, or to forget about, and ultimately avoid, an awareness of language as a primary experience. Language in its first instance (as in a trauma formulation) is generated or interpreted. It is not an objectified communication tool used through an assessment process. Rather, language is the conscious awareness (knowing of a thing as a possibility for living) of the way that the world is experienced for the speaker or reader (the person constructing the trauma formulation as intelligible). Assuming that language is comprised of words, and that words have within them a shared code that is transmitted when communicating them, is to assume that language is a technique. As a technique involving a rightful process of application of a code (word) onto an event, language is not available as a primary experience. From our phenomenological hermeneutic perspective, this is problematic. For Deetz (1973), for instance, to assume that “there is for every word some simple and handy appendage of a word called ‘the meaning of (the word) ‘x’ is tempting but wrongly supposed” (p. 62).

Language is not a mere communication tool. “Language is not man’s means of putting wordless thoughts and wordless experience into a form to which he has assigned a meaning; thinking, understanding, and experience are all completely linguistic, for it is through language that one has the world of understanding in and through which objects take their place in his experience” (Palmer, 1969, p. 230). From the point of view of phenomenological hermeneutics, two key problems are at play here. First, by asking the meaning of a word, we are engaged in a tenuous inquiry, because it is a quest for the function of language rather than an inquiry into a primary language experience. Searching for the meaning of words to ‘discover’ their function demands seeing words as structured, ordered, and

transmitted and objectified codes (Deetz, 1973, p. 42). Deetz (1973) argues that to ask what is the meaning of a word requires pulling away from direct lived experience. Such a question requires considering language as representational. Viewing words as codes requires thinking of words as representations of an original thing, rather than as an originating of the conscious awareness of the possibility of a way of existing in the world relationally. Words, within such a derivative and objectifying approach to language, thus serve on behalf of something. As representations, they are fundamentally a caricature, some version of a likeness of the original thing. In this way, words as codes are representative of objective and categorical meanings of something, as opposed to what they are as a possibility for living. Such an understanding means that to communicate trauma using the code of trauma is to apply a generic or representative shared meanings onto the word for another social actor. In this way, trauma talk is presupposed as independent of lived experience. Independent in that to aptly respond to the phenomenon of the popularization of trauma in contemporary society requires a knowledge of definitional and characteristic inventoried properties amassed through collected shared knowledge. Trauma then offers me an opportunity, when I apply or confront the term, to speak to others about or confirm good and evil boundaries in an effort to establish victimhood. In order to apply trauma communicatively, I must employ mental schemes “in a precise and controlled fashion through the application of words as conventional objects” (Deetz, 1973, p. 40).

From a phenomenological hermeneutic perspective, words are not codes for naming something. Rather than asking, ‘What is the meaning of trauma as a communication tool and how is it functional?,’ our work instead asks, ‘What *is* trauma?’ Wondering about the isness of trauma does not involve being animated by a yearning for an affinitive definition like *Fowler’s* (2008). Nor does it involve a search for an empirically-informed comprehensive conceptual scheme like *McNally’s* (2005), or a running list of foreseen invariant characteristics (Durkheim, 1951). Nor is it a quest for functionality of trauma as a code word when communicated like that presupposed by *Fassin and Rechtman* (2004). Instead, our

concern is rooted in a question about the particular form of life that opens up the concrete possibility, via conscious awareness, of trauma as a lived experience, especially as it manifests itself in and through language. Particular to our issue at hand, is how the popularization of trauma is “intrinsic to and involved in developing the possibilities for experience” (Deetz, 1973, p. 41) from within a particular relation to the world.

To understand popular trauma discourse as intrinsic to, and involved in, developing possibilities for experience, we must then turn into, rather than up from, what is said, as it is said, in casual trauma discourse. As we have seen thus far, this is a different task than that taken on by contemporary inquiries. From our point of view, popular trauma talk is not symbolic, it is not a representation of an original, nor is it a mistaken application of some conceptual scheme. Language in the province of human practice is not symbolic, it is not a representation of things, and it is not a product of conceptual schemes, although orienting to the World, its objects and others can be *done* symbolically, representationally, or conceptually. Words, as expressed through language, are unannounced taken-for-granted interpretive situational constitutions and reconstitutions of what is experienced as real, valuable and true to one’s lived reality (van Manen, 1977). Words, through language, are manifestations of becoming aware of one’s relational context to that which they confront in the social world from within a particular orientation. “Thoughts and perceptions are not coded into words” (Deetz, 1973, p. 44). Rather, thoughts and concepts become words only after a primary language experience. Language is therefore, not simply a tool by which humans share experience. Rather language belongs to primordial living more deeply, that is, the “W”orld. “The World is the interpreted, understood things coming into experience in a current project or the movement toward the future” (Deetz, 1973, p. 43). As described by Heidegger World, noted by the use of a capital “W”, is the “project-World”. Or said differently, “the nature of things as experienced” (In Deetz, 1973, p. 43). Meaning then that language “does not express man but the appearance of World” (Deetz, 1973, p. 46).

It is an interpretive activity within a particular modality that enables “objects to come into experience as they are experienced” (Deetz, 1973, p. 43). Language is foundational to human life, to human existence, since it is intrinsic to, and involved in, developing possibilities for experience in its first place. “To name a thing is to reveal, illuminate, it in a certain light, in a certain World with particular action possibilities” (Deetz, 1973, p. 46).

In the course of this work I have established a need to inquire into the form of life opened up by means of a conscious awareness of a lived experience of trauma reading (an intelligible concrete possibility that is taken-for-granted in the course of living). I have argued that inquiring in such a way necessitates an alternative approach. For this purpose I have oriented this work according to phenomenological hermeneutics in order to move beyond contemporary considerations of popular trauma talk from the position of a secondary approach to language. The importance of this distinction has been demonstrated by the effective removal of the reading member’s lived experience because of the abstracting and objectifying orientation of the secondary approach to language. Differently, the phenomenological hermeneutic approach provides a way to analyze popular trauma talk as a primary language experience. It is an approach that fosters the inquirer’s engagement with the popular trauma talk as it read and does not rest on securing and then applying routine methodological techniques rooted in the objectifying natural science model. By collecting what is missing in the current research I have demonstrated the need to get close to the grounds that provide for a popular trauma formulation to be read as intelligible among social members in the course of their everyday lives. The path for getting closer to what is said within popular trauma talk as it is read, therefore, will come in the form of turning into rather than away from what is written. By engaging popular trauma talk according to phenomenological hermeneutic principles I hope to collect an understanding of how the full scope of this talk in newspapers is possible in its first instance. Phenomenological hermeneutics demands that the inquirer recognize language in its intelligibility as possibilities for being. To contour what such an

inquiry would entail, I will next outline the principles of phenomenological hermeneutics that will direct the upcoming analysis of popular trauma talk occurring in Canadian newspapers. The phenomenological aspect of our work has come into clarity now. Phenomenologically, our focus is the modality of reading. It is clear that to get at this phenomenon this inquiry must involve a direct working through of what is embedded in what is said in popular trauma usages. It must involve a keen attention what is written in the text as the primary content of social members in a lived reading experience rather than working through the secondary content of theorists. Such an inquiry must seek to develop the inquirer's understanding of the worldly relation that is intrinsic to the everyday practice of a trauma talk newspaper reading experience. Using the interpretive principles hermeneutics we can open up what the various usages point to for the varied possibilities of meaning. Such will be our task, after the particulars of the phenomenological hermeneutics approach to be applied in this work are detailed.

Chapter 4: Understanding, Language and Experience According to Eight Phenomenological Hermeneutic Principles

The phenomenological hermeneutic approach used in this inquiry is rooted in the foundational principles of Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer as re-collected by Palmer (1969) and applied by Stanley Deetz (1973). I use this approach because my ultimate purpose is to understand trauma talk in popular discourse as an experience of social members from within their worldly existence. The phenomenological hermeneutics approach I adopt can be outlined in terms of eight foundational principles. Its deepest concern is to understand the connection between language and living in the world. These guiding principles highlight the difference between this orientation and other current theoretic approaches. I clarify each of the principles by applying them to current theoretic responses to the popularizing of the term trauma.

Phenomenological hermeneutics, as collected herein, is both a *theory* and a *method* for gaining practical access to understanding as it appears in the manifestation and disclosure of possibilities for living given the Worldly existence from within which this understanding happens. The guiding phenomenological hermeneutic principles for the purposes of this social inquiry are:

1. **Worldly popularity of a thing**, as made noticeable in its prevalence in language, necessitates an inquiry that will clarify the grounds that enable the thing to appear as a possibility to the social member in its first place.
2. **Language is the medium** in and through which experience and understanding happens.
3. **Spoken words are the speaker's self-understanding** disclosed in a consciousness that is particularly situated as a concrete possibility for living.

4. **World pre-exists** us in and through language, it is the basis of shared understanding in a relational context, it is intelligible in and through the medium of language, and we are endlessly and inseparably immersed within it in our being-in-the-world.
5. **Understanding is self-understanding** that happens first in and through language. A dialectical movement occurs prior to the sense of a subject-object split, as well as prior to any subjective or objectifying reaction, or any thematizing of things.
6. **Experience** is understanding that happens in a manner of play as one participates in the world in and through language. It is an interpretive event marked by an openness towards possibilities for living given a particular and finite horizon of understanding.
7. When coming up against unintelligible thingliness in a lifeworld, the expected understanding of a thing in a **relational context is broken**, making one's social location radically present.
8. A social member's openness to possibilities, and therefore understanding, is not free of prior assumptions, nor is it infinitely open. Its limits are tied to the finitude of one's horizon of understanding. Expected understanding is changed by way of a found **answer to an oriented question**.

We will consider these principles in depth in the sequence they are listed above. We begin with a discussion of what the popularity of a thing, as demonstrated in and through language, reveals and demands of an inquirer oriented towards phenomenological hermeneutics. Moving beyond simple description, we will clarify how our concern is noticeable within foundational works in hermeneutics and in phenomenology. This insight is important in order to make clear the difference between the phenomenological hermeneutic approach and other approaches used by scholars who study the phenomenon of the popularization of the term trauma.

World, language, understanding, and experience are essential features of phenomenological hermeneutics, both in terms of its theorizing as well as in its application. I provide examples at each stage. Taken together, the features of this approach provide a way of orienting the inquirer regarding the popularization of trauma. It allows the inquirer to adopt a posture from which social inquiry can gather language as a primary experience of everyday living.

Before beginning, I would like to draw attention to the last two principles outlined above #7 the unintelligibility of a thing interpretively encountered, and therefore experienced as a sense of brokenness while being-in-the-world; and #8 the finite nature of one's openness to possibilities for being-in-the-world. I use these two principles to analyze the notion of a "radical present", the situational human experience of being confronted by a situation of not knowing. Using contemporary inquiries into the popularizing of trauma, I work through the sense of brokenness generated by such a circumstance, as well as the finite character of understanding and experience. In doing so, I will attempt to develop an ability to understand how the response one provides to a question posed out of a sense of not knowing or brokenness is fundamentally rooted in the orientation of the question posed. We will come to see that the grounds for understanding something from within one's relational context are available to one in the very presuppositions and prejudgements involved in attempting to understand that situation. Consequently, the need to become aware of one's own limits of understanding when seeking to understand some worldly thing will be highlighted. Becoming aware of these limits will be fostered through a negative dialectical relation to knowing, that is, a knowing that we do not know.

Phenomenological Hermeneutic Principle 1: The Popularity of a Thing Necessitates a Particular Kind of Inquiry

In the introduction to *Being and Time* (1962), Heidegger finds 'Being' to be so popularized a word and concept as to leave it with a sense of its being an 'indefinable concept.' Its meaning is 'superfluous;' it is 'the emptiest of concepts' (p. 2). Heidegger (1962) claims that the inability of philosophers to fully grasp what pervades their talk in turn reinforces a continual gap in their development of a clear understanding of what they are saying. In their disinterest in developing a clear understanding of what centres much of their talk, Heidegger argues that philosophical discourse further perpetuates the hiddenness of Being. According to Heidegger, failure to clarify what one already knows something to be, even if taken for granted, results in a glossing over of the whatness of the thing. Glossing over the whatness of the thing such as Being is to treat it as self-evident. Treating as self-evident the possibility of asking about the whatness of a thing, Heidegger argues, delegitimizes the inquirer's questioning, rendering the inquirer incompetent. That which is intelligible and known in a given lifeworld in a taken-for-granted way is thereby rendered unintelligible, mistake-ridden or foolhardy. Heidegger states:

It is said that 'Being' is the most universal and the emptiest of concepts. As such it resists every attempt at definition. Nor does this most universal and hence indefinable concept require any definition, for everyone uses it constantly and already understands what is continually disturbing as something obscure and hidden has taken on a clarity and self-evidence such that if anyone continues to ask about it he is charged with an error of method (1962, p. 21).

Heidegger asks, if 'Being' is omni-present and, thus, omni-relevant for the philosopher in his or her lifeworld, then is it not of the gravest need, for the philosopher as inquirer, to understand? That is, if no problem arises for their self-understanding of a popular trauma formulation, then the need to

know what is already so known as to be self-evident is strange. And, if it is widespread, foundational and taken-for-granted in its relevance to sense-making within a given lifeworld, then does that not suggest that it is most in need of understanding? Does it not also demonstrate that it is most difficult to grasp from within that lifeworld for those seeking to understand it if they are unable to see through their own taken-for-granted grounds for understanding? Could this inability not stem from an immersion in their particular lifeworld, a habituation of their own predispositions? Given these concerns, Heidegger asks, how is it that a questioner can understand what is fundamental to one's understanding, while when one is attempting that understanding while they are already within a particular understanding of it, although unnoticeably so? In short, how do we get into a position to see what is deeply hidden from us? What it is in relation to the full context of our living that is required for understanding the thing in its first instance?

First, it is important to note that Heidegger is arguing that because we do not know the meaning of something that seems obvious to us, this sense of taken-for-grantedness is not grounds for avoiding the clarification of the Worldly relevance of something. "The indefinability of Being does not eliminate the question of its meaning; it demands that we look that question in the face" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 23). Second, Heidegger (1962, p. 27) contends that one's understanding of the thing that is pervasive in the context of living is already available to the inquirer, though concealed from him, in the way the thing is spoken of in language. In other words, what Being is in a relational context is made available by means of the way it is manifested and disclosed in language, *as a concrete possibility*, not as an abstract alternative.

If Being as a taken-for-granted and self-evident thing is some *thing* that is already understood and present in what is said (as demonstrated by its presence in language), then, within what is said, Being will be disclosed and appear, although in a hidden way, in what is said. Consequently, if what Being is rests in what is said, what is needed to reveal it is a way to access what is already secured in

language. Making Being transparent requires “choosing the right entity for our example, and to work out the genuine way of access to it” (1962, p. 26). Our interest rests in understanding what is hidden. Yet what is hidden is organized by means of language and experience. The examples ‘best suited’ for revealing meaning, therefore, are the everyday understandings of the thing (in our case, mainstream trauma talk). The language from within the province of human practice. This is the language demonstrates the grounds that make the understanding a possibility in its first instance. In seeking to question the relation of some *thing* to one’s existence in the world in this way means that, “in answering this question, the issue is not one of grounding something by ... a derivation; it is rather one of laying bare the grounds for it and exhibiting them” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 28). According to phenomenological hermeneutics, then, to know what is not known but taken to be self-evident about some thing requires asking what the thing is that one understands. Asking to know what is expected and anticipated to be known results in the questioner’s taking the risk of being considered an incompetent contemporary social member. By questioning the whatness of a thing that is self-evident in order to gather the grounds for its seeming to be that way, an understanding of the thing appears in its everydayness. The phenomenological hermeneutic inquirer’s concern is placed in what is already well-known to the member from within their own lifeworld that provides for the taken-for-granted intelligibility of the thing.

Phenomenological hermeneutics seeks ontological disclosure – how human existence is disclosed in and through language (Palmer, 1969, p. 137). It is concerned with how understanding emerges from within human worldly existence. Its role is to understanding the fact of world and the historicity of understanding. Facts refer to the concrete situations and the cultural and historical contexts in which people find themselves. Such constitutes the concrete limitations of human possibilities. Historicity is a determining characteristic of being-in-the-world for humans (Heidegger, 1962, p. 41). It constitutes the way in which one understands, relates to, and interprets their world and

their being within it, comprised as it is of one's past experience, that is, one's understanding of worldly possibilities as historically known. Historicity is the belief that the way we understand the situations that confront us in the world is rooted in the horizon that is shaped by our thrownness in the world. Importantly, situational experiences in the world are oriented toward a future existence in the world. Possibilities for understanding are forward looking or future oriented, but are grounded in the collection of one's past experiences. Understanding of one's situational existence is set by the limits (or finitude) of self-understanding. These limits govern and contain the future opportunities that exist for me in relation to the worldly situation within which I am now immersed. This understanding is the noted through the term historicity, which in turn is shaped by and through language and discourse.

'Being' as used in this work refers to social members' primary mode of existence. In relation to life situations, 'being ' refers to how members of a social world relate to one another, know themselves, and relate to and understand the world in which they are immersed. This totality of living happens as people move through the course of living. It encompasses all mundane and extraordinary affairs. It embraces one's relational existence situationally. As a mode of living, 'being' speaks of how social members are situated in their experience and relate to the world in which they are rooted. It is their elemental relational context. As I will show, 'world' is a situational concrete reality pulled together by the fabric of relations one has within the all-encompassing world that surrounds one. It is this reality that is termed Being and it is Being that is both manifested in and disclosed by language, but in a concealed way. Being is one's worldly existence that is perpetually in a state of becoming.

Phenomenological Hermeneutic Principle 2: Language is the Medium in and through which Experience and Understanding Occurs

In the phenomenological hermeneutic approach, the connection between language and experience is inseparable. Existing in the world as a social being means that living ensures that social

members are always within the flow of language (Deetz, 1973, p. 45-46). Language is the medium *in and through which* we understand, and thus experience, living. For the hermeneutic inquirer, language forms the basis for an understanding that occurs (or becomes) in a relational context. Becoming relational in developing an understanding means being directed in a particular mode of doing something in a world (like relating to a reading of a popular trauma formulation). As an interpretive activity, language operates for social members from within a particular situatedness. Interpretation of a trauma formulation, for instance, arises in and through an interpretive experience. It is not added to or inferred.

A conscious awareness of the concrete possibilities that exist for a social member in their situational historicity and facts for living are available to the reader of a trauma formulation. Not only in language are the possibilities for living available to a hermeneutic inquirer, but so too are the grounds that provoke the formulation of these possibilities and thereby orient intelligibility. Language is the medium through which humans share understanding, and thus experiences. In this way, language is the realm of worldly meaningfulness (intelligibility). Through language, one is able to have a shared understanding with another through participation in a common social world. In its being spoken, language conforms to and reflects experience. It constitutes one's fabric of relations as things are experienced.

Language is not a private affair. While language allows experiences to be understood, it also allows experiences between others to be brought into relation. As a Worldly occurrence, language is not a subjective event. The necessity of language for meaningful (intelligible) worldly existence among social beings is noted by Gadamer when he states, “[w]hoever speaks a language that no one else understands does not speak. To speak means to speak to someone” (Gadamer, 1989, p. 65). Spoken language, from a phenomenological hermeneutic perspective, is an event that involves participation in

an intelligible world that includes a fabric of relations that pre-exists. That pre-existence is beyond the realm of an individual's subjectivity. Newspaper talk too happens within relations that pre-exist us.

Phenomenological hermeneutics contends that language is not arbitrary. It is not a *thing* 'invented' by individuals. It is not some *thing* technically applied immediately following an experience in the world. It is not available without prejudice or presuppositions. Unlike speech and speaking, it is not some *thing* that humans have power over. All speaking shows its relation to language. Language provides for one's mode of being in a relational context because, through language, conscious awareness of the very nature of one's self and relations with others and to things in world manifests itself and is disclosed. As Palmer (1969, p. 205) makes clear, language is not a functional tool to point at things in the process of living. It is more intrinsic to living than that. Language is not application. Neither in its parts nor in its fullness does it signify some subjective experience (Deetz, 1973). Language is instead a dialectical (back and forth interpretive) movement or happening within a situation. It is an interpretive event whereby one's existence in the world and the world itself appears to the speaker and to the listener in a way that is itself worldly. To say that language 'discloses being' is to say that it creates the possibility for a person to understand herself and her relation to others in an intelligible way. While language discloses being in a shared way, and in a way that conforms to one's fabric of relations, it does so typically without notice.

To review briefly then, 'disclosing' is the manifesting of some *thing as it is*. At the heart of disclosing what a thing is in language are the grounds that make what is possible, appear. What appears in this manifesting is the thing inseparable from a fabric of relations (Palmer, 1969), otherwise understood as meaningfulness (Heidegger, 1962) from within the location of one's being-in-the-world. How a *thing* appears to be as it is, like a trauma formulation in popular discourse, does so as one exists in and through language. Existing in and through language is a kind of shorthand talk in phenomenological hermeneutics. It reminds us of, and speaks directly to, this inseparable connection

between language and existence. It is inherent in hermeneutic belief that, in understanding oneself, the world in which one exists, and the others with whom one relates, language is the medium through which and from which understanding is at all possible 'in its first instance'. 'In its first instance' refers to 'the most fundamental base of the thing.' Specifically, 'in its first instance' refers to the fundamental possibility for the thing (i.e. trauma formulation) to appear as it is in my being-in-the-world in relation to the thing at hand. It is in this getting at the disclosure of the world as it manifests itself in its possibilities for existence that phenomenology as both a method and a theoretical orientation takes hold. Through the principles of phenomenology, a concern for getting at things as they become manifest as what they are within the lifeworld becomes an organizing principle for our work. "Phenomenology is a means of being led by the phenomenon through a way of access genuinely belonging to it... the reality that comes to meet us" (Palmer, 1969, p. 128-129).

Given our relation to language as inseparable from our relational existence in the world, we can say that our concern for language is then a concern for the possibilities for being. Language, *as* how things are made into possibilities of experience (Deetz, 1973, p. 46), forces us to take seriously the space that is opened up by understanding the mode of being of social members as they are immersed in their worldly existence. Language is not only a realm of shared understanding that provides for nearness between those who interact with each other, but is at the same time the medium through which our relations and our experiences are created *as* world (Palmer, 1969, p. 206). In consequence, this meaning making affirms for us an organizing principle that people have an existence that is lived and understandable because they generate intelligibility in and through language. Moderns are able to experience trauma and are able to have a shared understanding of trauma in everyday talk because it is intelligible to them in and through language. It is available to them in language as a possibility for an experience within their world. More simply, causal trauma talk is a mode of existing for worldly members. It is available to moderns because social members exist *in* and *through* language wherein

worldly possibilities for trauma formulations manifest themselves. Through these formulations, the world that enables the possibility for casual trauma talk is disclosed (although in a way concealed from the everyday character of living and worldly understanding).

Through this principle, we understand that what appears through language is not something humanly mastered and applied. Nor is it something privately possessed as required by clinical expertise (McNally, 2009). What manifests, as it comes to us in and through language in a situation, produces, speaks from, and conforms to, a world. Worldliness in our approach is understood as interconnected sets of possibilities for coming into existence. Language, thus, does not express man but the appearance of world (Deetz, 1973, p. 46) to the speaker her/himself and to those with whom s/he interacts. Word use in language is therefore not something arbitrarily assigned, novel, or frivolous. Speaking occurs from within a lifeworld. Applied directly to our concern, a language event, like a trauma formulation, is a “conforming to the demands of the experience” (Palmer, 1969, p. 203). Casual trauma talk occurs via language. Although modes of existing, such as assigning into categories, or speaking in novel or frivolous ways, are available as possibilities for intelligible being-in-the-world, words themselves are meaningful in one’s context of living. As a language event, casual trauma talk can be understood, using phenomenological hermeneutics, as a happening that occurs in and through language, not as a private psychic affair, nor as “an expression of spirit or mind, but of situation and being” (Palmer, 1969, p. 203). For us, “in language, its saying power, not its form, is the central and decisive fact” (Palmer, 1969, p. 204). This work is not pursuing an interest in locating a ‘proper’ form for an intelligible trauma. It does not seek a prescription that trauma talk must adhere to in order to be considered as ‘correct’ per se. Instead, this work pursues an interest in recovering the grounds that reveal popular trauma talk as a possibility for living in their first instance.

Phenomenological Hermeneutic Principle 3: Language is Self-Understanding that Discloses a Conscious Awareness of a Possibility for Living

Phenomenological hermeneutics does not treat language as objective words placed onto experiences after their occurrence. To do so would be to treat words as representations of something other than what it was as a lived experience. Casual trauma formulations in popular discourse are read from one's situatedness within the temporality of the reading. Rather than adopting a secondary perspective, phenomenological hermeneutics requires relating to words as primary experience. Words and language happen within a situated experience from a particular social location. Deetz (1973) remarks that conferring words teaches one their thought. "That which is revealed, understood, and held is *in* language" (Deetz, 1973, p. 44). An experience is not first wordless and then subsumed under a word through naming. Without words, experience itself would not be possible. The distinction between experience, language and things is an illusion created by reflexive abstraction (or secondary language) (Deetz, 1973, p. 47). Primary or formative language experience is how social beings exist in the world. Their context is elementally relational. Participating in the world in and through language is prior to any action of objectification.

In phenomenological hermeneutics, words do not belong to people but to the situation (Palmer, 1969, p. 203). The situation that confronts us consists of trauma formulations read from a casual mood within a particular way of being in the world. The formulations themselves are oriented towards a particular worldly existence from within which the reading takes place. Through words, the thing-at-hand, when confronted from within one's existence, is disclosed in a certain light (Deetz, 1973, p. 47). Disclosed in a particular stance (Deetz, 1973, p. 48) is the dimension that most concerns us and is of greatest need to recover if the intelligibility of popular trauma talk is to be understood.

To name something is to demonstrate a particular conscious awareness of one's relation to the world, albeit in a typically unannounced or concealed way. What is disclosed in the use of words is an understanding of the thing named as a possibility for living that is meaningful within one's fabric of relations. In naming a thing in the world as it is, (like a trauma occurrence in popular trauma talk) one is connecting or relating it to their given historicity and temporality. An intelligible popular trauma talk occurrence, as opposed to another possibility, is then an interpretive dialectical activity that is of a particular Worldly relevance to the everyday reader (Deetz, 1973). Popular trauma talk in newspapers thus requires an awareness of how to do such a reading; of the modality of reading taken on by populous readers.

Heidegger suggested that formation, reducing a word to an unambiguous representative, would leave man in a senseless and static word. This language would only allow one to keep clear what is already known rather than allowing any formative experience. as signs, language becomes a veiling of transcendent objects rather than an unveiling, revealing, of the "nature of things" in the World (Deetz, 1973, p. 44).

According to our approach, trauma formulations are not available as the products of codifying procedures and methods (McNally), or as a structured category (*Fowler's*). Trauma formulations are interpretative events that disclose a particular relational context for understanding. They result from a particular stance that one adopts as s/he exists within the world. However, the possibility of a mode of existing that objectifies and represents is certainly available. So are grounds for becoming aware of the concrete possibility of a trauma formulation. In other words, a stance that objectifies is always possible. It is a particular way to orient to the world. But such an orientation is just one possible orientation among many. A plurality of possibilities is available to everyday members living within a multiplicity of lifeworlds. Our approach to newspapers requires of us a particular Worldly orientation to do the modality of reading for practical purposes. Therefore, rendering an intelligible popular trauma

talk reading unproblematically reveals or illuminates an intelligible experience in a certain light. The self-understanding of the trauma formulation in a newspaper relates one's participation in the world to particular concrete possibilities for living. As such this perspective, alternative to contemporary theorizing about the phenomenon of the popularization of trauma, allows us to understand newspaper trauma talk differently while still unbroken to the social member in the modality of reading from within the province of human practice.

As outlined in this principle, illuminating the *thingliness* of doing a popular trauma talk reading can make the intelligibility of the possibility of a trauma formulation appear. The interpretive action of generating a trauma formulation generates at the same time the awareness of the presence of the thing (trauma) in relation to oneself in the world. It is not a simple application process of letting a word stand for some *thing*. The interpretive event that connects experience and language in the same instance is the *pre-reflexive* achievement of a situational stance concerning how some *thing* is understood in one's relational context.

Phenomenological Hermeneutic Principle 4: World Pre-exists us and is Inseparable from Being

The world to which phenomenological hermeneutics refers is the experiential world revealed and understood in and through language. "The world is always a human, and this means linguistically created, world which is present in whatever heritage it may be" (Gadamer, in Palmer, 1969, p. 207). Experientially, world is available to social members through shared understanding. "The world and our existence in the world is what creates a shared understanding between individuals, and the medium that makes this understanding of the world possible is language. Language is where the world resides, and hermeneutic experience...occurs in and through language; it is language that discloses the world in which we live" (McManus Holroyd, 2007, p. 5).

World is the arena of understanding that language makes possible (Palmer, 1969, p. 206). Having a world requires participation. However, the kind of participation identified here is not engagement by way of the mere application of an accumulated inventory of words. It is not a process of reflexively applying words to a subjective experience, as if one were in some sense fastening them in some way. Worldly participation in experience speaks to an active, dialectical engagement with language. Yet it is most often taken-for-granted and unproblematic. Language is the medium for this participation.

World to an individual is not self-evident, even though both world and language provide for such a possibility. The world is objectified in a secondary rather than a primary mode of living because language and being-in-the-world are prior to, and independent of, a particular person's subjective experience. Before they objectify, people have a world available to them already by way of their immersion in a pre-existing heritage of language. Indeed, this heritage creates the very possibility for a World and their participation in it. This contention is a cornerstone of phenomenological hermeneutics: World pre-exists and supersedes an individual's singular Worldly existence.

In phenomenological hermeneutics, World is not understood as merely what is around us. It is not an ecological system, for instance. Let us be clear: by "World" we understand "the whole in which the human being always finds him[or her]self already immersed, surrounded by its manifestness as revealed through an always pregrasping, encompassing understanding" (Palmer, 1969, p. 132). World is not available as separate from one's self. It is only available in relational context. It pre-exists a subject-object split. It exists before all objectifying or thematizing. It is present prior to individual subjectivity. It is impossible to be tallied or inventoried because World is not able to be isolated as an entity comprised of discrete units (Palmer, 1969, p. 132). World only exists in relation to being (Palmer, 1969, p. 132) in a relational context.

World has an *a priori* importance for phenomenological hermeneutics. “Every entity in the world is grasped as an entity in terms of world, which is always already there” (Palmer, 1969, p. 132). People exist and make sense in a World. The World is of such nearness and pervasiveness to all understanding in everyday life that one sees through it. Yet there is no manifestness outside of or separate from World. “Unnoticed, presupposed, encompassing, world is always present, transparent and eluding every attempt to grasp it as an object” (Palmer, 1969, p. 133). The *a priori* importance of world for phenomenological hermeneutics is of particular notice in an instance of brokenness of understanding. Where everyday life (understanding in relational context) lacks intelligibility, and is thus problematized for the everyday member within their natural setting, “the meaning of these objects lies in their relation to a structural whole of interrelated meanings and intentions...is lighted up” (Palmer, 1969, p. 133).

Language reveals a socially shared World that is beyond private subjective experience. In and with the World, language is shared and public. Thus it is objectively real to social members, but not objectified (Palmer, 1969, p. 205). World is created in a sharable way, and is therefore intersubjectively knowable. It enables meaningful personal experiences (Deetz, 1973, p. 48). Subject matter in the World is understood according to its particular possibilities for disclosure, given the finitude of one’s understanding (Deetz, 1979, p. 48). According to phenomenological hermeneutics, the world spoken of and worked within is called the lifeworld (Palmer, 1969).

Typically, the everyday lifeworld provides for unobtrusive routine experience and understanding in the course of daily living. Through my routine knowing of a thing that confronts me in daily life, the worldliness of the thing sustains a sense of givenness, a connection to my past experience and understanding of the thing. When the situational meaningfulness of the thing is disrupted, my relation to the given thing is awakened. In such a disruption of my knowing, I do not take the thing as I encounter it, as I know it or expect it to be, but rather I consider the thing in a new relation in its

contemporary situatedness as it now appears to me. In the dialectic that occurs between collecting my new, different, and unexpected relation to the thing, a change in possibilities for my relation to the thing is disclosed to me in and through language. These are possibilities that were not available to me prior to this interpretive movement. Next we will give further consideration to this experience of brokenness presently.

Phenomenological Hermeneutic Principle 5: Understanding Happens in and through a Language Event from within the Lifeworld

Understandings and meaningful or intelligible social actions do not subjectively exist in isolation. They are not private activities of the mind. Understanding formulates the concrete activities that are meaningfully oriented in one's given social action. Social action is always oriented or directed by an understanding from within a particular lifeworld with a particular situatedness in a given instance. In the case of newspaper content, the particular situatedness is the anonymous reader, for whom the trauma occurrence is intelligible within their generic social context. It requires anonymous readers to be oriented in a particular way in order for unproblematic intelligibility to be possible.

In its orientation, social action is directed by an understanding that reveals a possibility for existing. This possibility is limited in a particular way so as to ground it as intelligible (as distinct from another option for oriented meaningful action). Social action as one is immersed in worldly living requires understanding some *thing*, to which the action is oriented, in a particular way. In and through the relational context of understanding "every conscious activity [as directed/oriented social action] is already meaningful and composed" and the "interpretive activity hidden in what is made apparent" (Deetz, 1973, p. 43).

Existing in a world ensures that things are never experienced as isolated or independently self-evident. "Things are understood directly in terms of their possibilities for our acting in the world,"

(Deetz, 1973, p. 43) in accordance with one's historic and temporal relation to them. Worldly shared understanding makes intersubjectivity possible. Since understanding is oriented by our situational stance, a stance rooted in a relational connection to a past, present and future, one's understanding of things cannot be static or permanent. If understanding is not static, neither is it arbitrary or indiscriminate, exactly because it comes into being in this relational context. Concrete possibilities for living are not permanent, because experience is characteristically open to ways of existing that are directed by a particular historicity and temporality. "Experience, when approached from a stance of openness, places our mental and intellectual processes at stake, and [in this openness] demonstrates a willingness to surrender our attachments to our current knowledge" (McManus Holroyd, 2007, p. 3).

The lifeworld, our social location for knowing and experiencing the world in a relational context of meaning, reflects both our way of being in the world and the structure of meaningful relationships that we create in the world (McManus Holroyd, 2007, p. 2). Because developing a relational context for understanding is necessary in the first place, an intelligible trauma formulation cannot be without meaning. It cannot have the possibility of being anything imaginable as current inquiries contend. Gadamer outlines this form of existence as situatedness that is the basis for our horizon of understanding. "The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point" (Gadamer, in Palmer, 1969, p. 302). However, gaps between horizons of understanding from within differing lifeworlds exist. For instance, one can have an historic, experiential, linguistic, or cultural gap between the finitude of their understanding and the finitude of understanding from that of another social member who is communicating with them. In order for a person within a given lifeworld to recognize as intelligible the different understanding of someone from another lifeworld, one must (1) be able to see the limits of their own understanding, and (2) be willing or open to alter, expand, and otherwise deconstruct, and then reconstruct, the borders of their understanding. Altering one's understanding of a thing is possible by first understanding the limits of one's

understanding for seeing in relation to the possibilities that exist for another. Limiting the gap that stands between one's horizon and that of another, like experiencing new possibilities in everyday life, requires growth and change. Phenomenological hermeneutics explains this positioning of knowing that one does not know, as a negative dialectical engagement. It is a vibrant awareness of not knowing. It is marked by the radical presence of the incapacity of one's temporality and historicity to see and render intelligible an openness to the possibility of an experience that one does not know.

In phenomenological hermeneutics, the interpretative experience of knowing that one does not know involves risk. One's horizon of understanding is the basis of one's existence. It is how I understand myself and the world within which I am immersed. Altering the boundaries of my horizon means altering myself. Within this instance of knowing that one does not know, a relational context for an adequate understanding of the possibilities of the other's understanding of the thing is unavailable. In such an instance, the remedy for not knowing is actively working to develop an understanding. In order to develop such an understanding of another currently unknown possibility within one's existence requires an openness to the possibility of changing oneself in order to render the unintelligible intelligible.

The risk that one must take is the risk of destroying one's self-understanding. One's changing how they understand themselves in their existence, the relations they have with others, and their understanding of the world, is at risk when expanding the limits of their understanding. In this way, phenomenological hermeneutics argues that the inquirer is directly implicated in their inquiry. How we understand textual (and non-textual) communications about the world is dependent upon our own finitude of understanding in its relational context.

One's ability to experience and understand the encounter with the other will be directed by the initial fusion of the familiar – your own lifeworld – with the unfamiliar – the individual other's

lifeworld. From here, it is possible to challenge the taken for granted attitudes and beliefs that are part of each individual's context and history. ...this type of research and practice involves a willingness to engage in a progressive letting go of what we currently know and understand. In brief, this is the beginning of hermeneutic understanding. (McManus Holroyd, 2007, p. 5)

In phenomenological hermeneutics, the nature of human understanding is not reducible to a notion of fulsome sharing of subjective experience 'arrived at' through some kind of empathetic understanding whereby one transports oneself into an approximated experience lived through by other. Understanding is instead a happening. Understanding, according to Heidegger, is a constitutive element of being in the world as opposed to something that is possessed (Palmer, 1969). Its nature is one that gets worked out in particular ways in particular historical contexts. In our case, this nature gets worked out for the everyday member in the course of living in the mode of reading newspaper talk. The talk is directed and organized for a reader to relate to in a casual way. The relational context that grounds the nature of the working out of popular trauma talk must, then, be collected. This will be our task in Chapter Five.

Understanding is inseparable from existence. Because understanding happens through one's existence, and humans exist as beings. They exist in relation to their understanding of the world in which they are immersed (Palmer, 1969). In phenomenological hermeneutics, understanding is requisite for humans to exist in the world. It is fundamental to the co-understanding necessary for human beings to exist socially, to have a shared and thus worldly place as being-in-the-world with others. In coming from, while at the same time comprising, one's existence, understanding is emergent. In this way understanding is active not stagnant. It is not concretized and stable. Like the very nature of existence, understanding is always in the process of becoming. It is, however, typically taken-for-granted as occurring by way of a dialectical movement in the course of being-in-the-world.

By dialectical movement, we mean that understanding is a movement of one's being within a given social location. It is constituted through three intersections in one's fabric of relations: 1) one's past or historical consciousness in relation to the thing-at-hand; 2) the present or current situatedness in the world in relation to the thing-at-hand; and 3) their future or projective orientation to the thing-at-hand. In a given situation, a stance is taken. An understanding of one's relation to a thing within the lifeworld is a disclosure of self-understanding. It consists of one's existence in the world in relation to worldly things. Pre-reflexively, understanding is the "the power to grasp one's own possibilities for being, within the context of the lifeworld in which one exists" (Palmer, 1969, p. 131).

Understanding emerges in a future orientation. Its essence is in its disclosure of concrete or practical possibilities for being within the horizon of one's immediate placement in the world (Palmer, 1969, p. 131). Understanding always operates within a set of pre-existing relations. At the same time it is projective, while being rooted in one's situation (Palmer, 1969, p. 131). Since understanding manifests in concrete possibilities for being within one's horizon, it always operates within pre-understandings, prejudgments embedded in one's relations in the world. This has implications for our project as understood in contemporary inquiry. For example, both *Fowler's* (2008) and McNally (2005) point to popular trauma formulations in contemporary usage as misguided and mistaken.

Phenomenological hermeneutics would argue that these formulations are not novel applications of a once structured word. They are instead disclosures in a worldly relation from a particular situatedness. In the case of popular discourse, they are situated and intelligible by virtue of their casual orientation from the situatedness of a generic everyday member in the modality of a popular trauma reading.

As concrete possibilities for the disclosure of worldly living from a casual stance, trauma formulations in popular discourse show us the appearance of a world and an existence different from one within which these understandings of living were not present. It shows us that there is a particular form of living in contemporary society for which popular trauma talk is meaningful. Even though

examples of it exist outside of the limits of expert discourse, they exist within the fabric of relations of those everyday members existing within the mundane lifeworld. Deetz summarizes this point:

The using of a common word in a new or unusual sense is possible and senseful because this usage and the already meaningful words about it open a new Worldly stance in such a way that traditional language shifts itself in this dimension and develops that World. Intersubjectivity is made possible by this transubjectivity of language – the sharable World which the linguistic gesture creates. (1973, p. 49)

“If we wish to understand the possibilities and implications in what another says rather than merely know what he says, we will have to begin to search for and hint at the Worldly perspective necessary for it rather than appeal for exact definition” (Deetz, 1973, p. 51). If, we seek to understand how trauma as a word is popularized, such understanding is not available through the generation of a categorical definition of correct application (*Fowler’s*) or an inventory knowledge of the function of a word use as an answer to a problem (Fassin & Rechtman). Phenomenological hermeneutics requires making the taken-for-granted intelligibility of popular trauma talk in the everyday lifeworld strange. By requires seeking to recover what is unproblematically understood, we can learn something. For this purpose the taken-for-granted interpretive processes involved in generating intelligible popular trauma talk are made unknown in order to collect the features of social life that provide for its ambiguous character. For this inquiry, we are asking what are the grounds for an ordinary social member’s unproblematic intelligibility of the full scope of popular trauma talk in the modality of reading? All understanding is relational. It is worldly and emerges in and through language in an interpretive process from a particular stance. Understanding a popular trauma talk occurrence as an intelligible possibility for living as it is appears in and through what is communicated in language requires collecting the horizon that makes this popular trauma formulation an intelligible instance in the first place: the casual

stance for engaging a trauma formulation from the modality of reading from within a particular Worldly existence.

Phenomenological hermeneutics contends that all texts (like newspapers) are “strange and inaccessible” as content that is “distanced from the interpreter” (McManus Holroyd, 2007, p. 2). But “despite the sense of strangeness and distance between the interpreter and the individual and/or text, there is an assumed link or commonality between the two, making the event of understanding feasible. This event of understanding is an on-going effort basic to our being in the world” (McManus Holroyd, 2007, p. 2). From the perspective taken in this work thus far, the link that makes the text a possibility for understanding is the stance that is opened up from the situational historicity and fact of the interpretive encounter. For McNally (2005), a grounding in the principles of a practitioner embedded in a natural science orientation to the world entails knowing by moving away from existence and experience in the everyday lifeworld and into the world of concepts produced through abstraction from experience. For popular trauma talk in newspapers, the perspective offered by natural science is one way of referencing the information. But this knowing tells us only that a plurality of lifeworlds exists and can be used resourcefully by everyday members. What such a response does not provide is an understanding of the relation that everyday members have to popular trauma formulations in print. Nor does it help us understand popular trauma talk occurrences that get worked through in a particular relation to the world. Such working through must form a significant part of our final section.

In contrast to phenomenological hermeneutics, each of the other theoretical responses to the topic presuppose and prejudge a brokenness or something crucial missing and necessary for a proper trauma formulation to be intelligible to an expert. Each case presupposes an intelligible popular trauma talk situation from a particular stance. Each response seeks to correct these broken or problematized formulations by reconstituting the framework from which the brokenness has originally occurred. *Fowler's* (2008) pre-judges on the basis of the degree of adherence to or drift from the etymological root

of the word trauma. For *Fowler's*, intelligible trauma formulations are presupposed to be 'proper' applications of the word. Correctness, from *Fowler's* horizon, is determined by the observable adherence to characteristic defining features. These are outlined in its own concrete experience (and possibility) from within the limits of its own linguistic orientation to the world.

From *Fowler's* point of view, intelligible trauma formulations are those that effectively replicate and verify a given pre-existing codified categorization structure. Trauma formulations beyond its limits do not meet these expectations. Such are something other than a legitimate trauma formulation. From *Fowler's* stance as the linguistic expert, improper uses of word use in common everyday talk are problems in need of correction. But theirs is just one way of seeing as distinguished from another.

Casual use of the word trauma lacks the root properties of the word. *Fowler's* therefore understands popular trauma talk to be ambiguous, empty, and worthless, because the word can be applied without its original structure. Without adherence to this structure, trauma is a word that can be applied to any situation. Its brokenness gives rise to a question that orients itself to particular answer rather than other possibilities. The orientation to language as a secondary rather than a primary experience provides the grounds for seeing some possibilities while preventing others.

Phenomenological hermeneutics argues that presuppositions and prejudgements are essential to interpretation and understanding. As such, they cannot be forsaken. Humans cannot interpret or have experience without the use of presuppositions and prejudgements. Understanding is never presuppositionless or without judgement. What is necessary, however, is an understanding of one's own presuppositions and judgements, that is, the expectations that provide a basis for understanding in a particular way. In this way one is better positioned to grasp the limits of one's own understanding of worldly phenomena. *Fowler's* presuppositions problematize the lack of structure of a thing. We would need to consider what kind of existence anticipates this form of living. That is, what a

form of structured living means for the relational context of one's totality of life (Palmer, 1969, p. 134). We could use *Fowler's* in order to understand a relation to things in its patented form. In contrast, a phenomenological hermeneutic approach would require us to avoid disinterest or dismissal of *Fowler's* position. Instead, we would be compelled to engage the possibility of *Fowler's* understanding directly by seeking to collect the historicity and fact embedded in *Fowler's* articulation (what is said as it is said). We would engage *Fowler's* understanding directly in an effort to gather the grounds for this possibility in its first instance. We would be seeking to develop a deeper understanding of the being-in-the-world that presupposes this possibility of this brokenness. We would ultimately understand the position as one possibility from within a particular relational context afforded by a particular Worldly existence.

Phenomenological Hermeneutic Principle 6: Experience is a Dialectical Happening, an Encounter with the Openness of Possibilities for Living

On the other hand, McNally (2005) prejudices on the basis of a thematized Worldly orientation. For McNally, meaningful trauma formulations are presupposed to be those that are objectively determined on the basis of empirically derived categories as endorsed by an overseeing professional accrediting body. Intelligible trauma formulations are concrete possibilities from within clinical mental health practice. They (1) are determined by empirically trained and professionally monitored experts; (2) stem from rigorous methodological procedure; (3) are based on objective evidence; and (4) provide objective confirmation with sufficient certainty that trauma actually exists. With a trauma formulation established on the basis of replicable validation criteria, McNally's grounding presupposes the ability of clinicians to achieve certainty over the presence or absence of trauma. Through a sense of obtaining sufficient, empirically informed certainty, the clinician has prejudgements for determining a trauma formulation as worthy and intelligible or unworthy and unintelligible. First, our phenomenological hermeneutic orientation contends that people do not have power over language through application. Rather, language gives us the power "of being seized by what is made manifest through it" (Palmer,

1969, p. 128) from within a particular way of being-in-the-world. For instance, throughout this work I am seized by the poaching done by the anonymous reader of whom I attempt to give voice to their everyday practices. Yet it is exactly this reader who does not need this voice since they unproblematically have the understanding necessary to do a popular trauma reading. Second, McNally's horizon of expert understanding differs from that of the modality of everyday living. Rather than seeking to broaden his horizon and expand the limits of his understanding he relies on a clinical horizon to judge the other. We will deal with each of these concerns in turn.

We find a stark difference between McNally's (2005) position on language and that adopted by phenomenological hermeneutics. To McNally, the language of a trauma formulation is afforded through clinical expertise. In contrast, we contend that language is not meaningful to the speaker, or to another worldly member, as the result of the affording of something to the instance. A formulation of casual trauma talk is meaningful because, in its hiddenness, in what is unsaid, its saying provides for unproblematized understanding. It is thus an intelligible possibility from a worldly past, a particular present situation, and a certain orientation toward or anticipation of particular future possibilities.

In the case of casual trauma talk in newspapers, intelligible popular trauma talk from the everyday lifeworld is a conscious awareness of a possibility for living in the world as the formulation is experienced from within that lifeworld. It is a language event making possibilities available to the generic social member. The intelligibility of a popular trauma talk occurrence in popular discourse is therefore rooted in the historicity and fact of their being. Possibilities are available from the point of view specific to the everyday member in this Worldly existence rather than from the point of view of a clinical expert.

For McNally, a 'listening professional' is the credible listener. He or she is especially able to hear and to render a trauma formulation intelligible. Through the clinician's expertise, the empirically and

professionally guided profession is the authoritative voice. As a particularly equipped listener, the clinician is considered to have direct access in the first instance to a trauma formulation because his or her empirical precision presupposes an ability to pronounce certainty over a valid and reliable (worthy or unworthy) trauma formulation. The full scope of trauma talk in popular discourse is considered trivial and undisciplined from McNally's point of view stems from a lack of adherence to rigorous methodology. Such methodology and prescribed procedure would provide for objective certainty.

In phenomenological hermeneutics, because experience happens in and through language, and language happens in and through experience, language and experience are characterized by a dialectical movement. It is an interpretive encounter involving an openness to possibilities for growth in one's finitude of understanding. Our second concern with McNally's position, then, is his inability to grasp the intelligibility of casual talk as a disclosure of a particular possibility from a particular mode of being in the world.

It [experience] refers to a nonobjectified and largely nonobjectifiable accumulation of "understanding" which we often call wisdom. For example, a man who has all his life dealt with people acquires a capacity for understanding them which we call "experience." While his experience is not objectifiable knowledge, it enters into his interpretive encounter with people. It is not a purely personal capacity, however; it is knowledge of the way things are, a "knowledge of people" that cannot really be put into conceptual terms. (Palmer, 1969, p. 195-196)

Given phenomenological hermeneutics' contention that experience takes place as humans interact in relation to their world through language in order to make it meaningful from a particular social location, experience is seen to occur through a dialectical and interpretive movement of understanding. In referencing Gadamer, Palmer (1969) states that "experience is experience of

finitude" (1986, p. 196). For instance, in a trauma testimonial, a woman describes a known change in her ability to relate to the world as she was once able to do so in the following quote.

I can hardly believe that the rest of the world is just going on as it always has. The Mac's Milk is still the hangout for the teenagers. The neighbourhood streets and houses look like they always have. My kids still fight as much as ever. It is hard to undergo so much and to have changed so much and then find that everything else is the same. (Clarke, 1985, p. 94)

The speaker here depicts clearly a change in her understanding of the world. She reveals a vivid awareness of the difference that her trauma experience has made as a change in her finitude of understanding. The result is a new possibility for living. As a new knowing within the talk, we see a back and forth interpretative movement between an historic understanding and a new relation to world lived out as a revised understanding. In this instance the everyday world appears as casual, indifferent to her transformed understanding by virtue of her potential 'death' encounter. What seemed engaging and absorbing before is now a lived experience of the world of anonymous generic others whose casualness of living strikes her as remarkable. But her vivid new living practices are experienced as unavailable to those 'others'. For, if they were in her new living practices, they would not simply 'hang out' or 'fight just as much as ever,' because in her new relation to the world and situational existence, in contrast to her past experience, that casualness is not be a possibility for living.

According to Gadamer (2004), the experience that changes one's finitude of understanding is one that happens in a manner of play. Play in the openness of possibilities for living that are within the potential of being changed, but still rooted in one's historic consciousness. We see this openness of possibilities for living in her listing of relational differences that are characteristically different (that once were) from the current relations (the here and now). Her words do not prescribe a new form of living, but rather reflect both an openness and a known difference from what was. In other words,

phenomenological hermeneutics addresses this stretch of talk by seeking to tease out the intersubjective understandings that the talk relies on, rather than categorizing it as either trivial or serious or correct in relation to a prescribed structural form.

Phenomenological hermeneutics presupposes the dialectical movement of experience as happening in a manner of “play”. Experience occurs for people while they are in the midst of already being-in-the-world, that is, in a relational context. An openness to possibilities exists for the intelligibility of a thing as it is confronted relationally from within a particular situatedness. When characterized as being in a state of openness to the potential of a new future understanding, experience becomes future oriented. As demonstrated in the trauma talk outlined above, this future orientation is marked by a situational openness to a revised understanding from what was once known to be given through an historic consciousness. The sense of openness that arises in the experience above is describable as a sense of playfulness because when participating in the world. A reader of the text must have the wisdom to play “with possibilities or with plans” (Gadamer, 1989, p. 104). They must have the capacity to read with “the freedom to decide one way or the other, for one or the other possibility” (Gadamer, 1989, p. 104). This play is situated in the here and now, while setting the grounds for future understandings in its potentiality. In the language of a trauma formulation, the reader must have an openness to the possibility of understanding her relation to the world in a new way.

Relying on Gadamer, Palmer states that experience “is a matter of multisided disillusionment based on expectation; only in this way is experience acquired” (1986, p. 196). “Experience, in the true sense of its inner meaning, teaches one inwardly to know that he is not lord over time. It is the “experienced” man who knows the limits of all anticipation, the insecurity of all human plans. Yet this does not render him rigid and dogmatic but rather open for new experience” (Palmer, 1969, p. 196). Returning to the usage above, the speaker’s experience, the change in her relational context, appears in the course of reading. Through the reading, as it is read, a sense of being cut off from everything the

writer was previously close to (neighbourhood, kids fighting, etc.) appears. In a situational experience, a social being has expectations, based on their historic consciousness, of the possibilities that are open to them, making experience an encounter with heritage in and through language. Expectations of present worldly happenings are based on one's historic consciousness. One's heritage though, Palmer explains (1969, p. 197), is not something outside of a person. It is not like a separate object pressing down. It is rather a "nonobjectifiable stream of experiences and history in which [s]he stands" (Palmer, 1969, p. 197). It is a linguistic experience, an understanding that comes in and through language.

Phenomenological Hermeneutic Principle 7: Radically Present Brokenness of Things Is Invoked by a Negativity of Not Knowing

Phenomenological hermeneutics tells us that, in the brokenness of a thing, one's relation to the thing is questioned. The talk above shows us one example of brokenness. The 'just going on' of the world, which previously the speaker was absorbed in by virtue of its ordinary intelligibility, is now somewhat strange. The brokenness of a thing is "the realm where the temporality and historicity of being are *radically present*, and the place where being translates itself into meaningfulness to understanding, and interpretation" (Palmer, 1969, p. 134; emphasis added). Seeking to understand is a seeking to collect a relational context for establishing the meaningfulness of the thing confronted. It is how social members establish the grounds for intelligibility when an expected understanding of a thing is unavailable. This is an experience of unintelligibility. Guiding this seeking of a relational knowledge about a thing one is thrown up against a world we have learned, presuppositions and prejudgements that orient the question posed to the brokenness and ultimately formulate the possibility for seeing an answer as an intelligible response. The response, the answer to the question as posed, is adequate when it is judged to be reasonable and meaningful in relation to the question as posed. The question itself is grounded in the horizon of understanding that one has from within their fabric of relations.

Phenomenological hermeneutics, as we have localized it, contends that a lived experience of missing something from a thing involves an inability to see the thing as situationally confronted from within one's relational context. Existing in the state of brokenness alongside the thing in the world is an experience of negativity. Meaning is not available to us as might be typically expected. The experience of not knowing what should be known (as demonstrated in the aforementioned trauma formulation) is a negative dialectical movement. As they move through life pre-reflexively, in their primary language experience, humans expect to know what they are confronted with in the course of living as if they already know the thing. Everyday movement through life, Palmer says, involves an orientation to the world in which one expects to already know, "in the way he already understands, then he acquires that structure of openness characterizing authentic questioning" (Palmer, 1969, p. 198). As we have already seen, the ideal of scientific inquiry, that is, one that can interpret without prejudgement or can control for biases or prejudices, is impossible. To argue as much is fundamentally contradictory to the very nature of understanding. For, "what appears as the thing situationally at hand is what one allows to appear and what one's situatedness in the world will bring to light." As Palmer states (1969), it is naïve to assume that what is "really there" is "self-evident" (p. 136). Every encounter with language, with a world, happens within one's horizon of experience and understanding. Interpretation happens in a particular time and place for which there is no "blank openness" but rather a finitude of possibilities for understanding (Palmer, 1969, p. 136). We are then led to another hermeneutic principle.

As *Fowler's* (2008) rightly notes, everyday members are using the word trauma in their causal talk in ways that differ from those outlined in its etymological root. From a phenomenological hermeneutic approach, trauma talk in popular discourse is not typically experienced as a brokenness to intelligibility. It is not a negativity of knowing when engaged in the modality of reading. It is instead meaningful as it is read. It is worldly. Trauma formulations are, however, experienced as broken from the horizon of theoretical understanding of each of the inquirers. They are broken from within the horizon of a

lifeworld. In their questioning of the popularization of trauma, “there is an ultimate wall of negativity” because contemporary inquirers have problematized the relation to these formulations from a position characterized by “the knowledge of not knowing” (Palmer, 1969, p. 198) and are unable to move beyond this divide productively.

The increased prevalence, expanse and variety of casual trauma talk in mainstream culture collected thus far shows that casual trauma talk is not typically encountered as a problem resulting from the brokenness of a thing. It does not typically generate problematized living for social members in mainstream contemporary culture; rather, it is expected to be intelligible. From a casual orientation, popular trauma talk does not “lighten up” the everyday relational context of trauma formulations as a worldly thing for social members immersed in their natural attitude (taken-for-grantedness). It does not make the world obtrusive to the everyday member in the process of living. Popular trauma discourse is not a broken object. That’s because, for the everyday member, the fabric of relations within the world (Palmer, 1969, p. 134) and the grounds of intelligibility and meaning is intact, albeit invisibly so. For the expert, on the other hand, casual trauma talk, in its casualness, raises a problem that necessitates an analytic posture, a deliberative attention. Phenomenological hermeneutics requires us to ask what are the grounds provided by a casual orientation that leads to our drawing a conclusion? What enables the intelligibility of all possibilities of a popular trauma formulation at once, yet fades into the background practices of everyday living? To understand the relational context of casual living in this way ultimately requires moving beyond the limits of understanding available to the expert. The limits to the possibilities for understanding casual trauma talk as intelligible prevent a relation to such talk as primary language experience. To this point we now turn.

Phenomenological Hermeneutic Principle 8: One’s Openness to Possibilities is Finite and Oriented

Experiencing means being open to the possibilities for living. Experience is brought about by the interpretive action of developing one's understanding in a relational context, situated in the brokenness of a thing. To our case, we are disrupting the idea that popular trauma talk is unintelligible. That it is everything and anything. That it is irrational and undisciplined nonsense. We are directly inquiring about the intelligibility of the full scope of trauma talk, not solely that is representative of a strategic (trauma elite) understanding. We are inquiring directly, through the use of this principle, about the nature of the intelligibility of trauma talk from within the province of human practice by disrupting the everyday casual trivialness of a trauma talk newspaper reading that is unproblematically intelligible to social members within the modality of reading. We are questioning, what is it about trauma talk that is intelligible in and amongst the widely disparate usages of the term? Like De Certeau, we are taking up the intelligibility of the ordinary reader as a topic. Furthermore, we are asking, what is the limit to recognizing that a newspaper reading is unintelligible, casual and trivial?

The state of knowing that one does not know and is unable to rely on historic consciousness as expected for intelligibility leads to the questioning of the thing. Phenomenological hermeneutics contends that, in questioning some *thing*, the directedness for understanding is disclosed in the answer that is formulated. In other words, with their expectation of intelligibility disrupted, the interpreter develops an understanding that involves the use of a dialectical method in order to establish a relation to the thing situationally. The dialectical method particularly is one whereby establishing truth for the basis of understanding is worked through in a process of interpretation that has ingrained within it a direction for a particular openness to a possibility for living.

The method used by *Fowler's* (2008) in order to see the truth regarding popularization was established on the basis of viewing everyday talk as being outside of the limits of the etymological root of the word trauma. Everyday use was confirmed by presenting an instance of mainstream talk outside of the limits of its originating form. Commonness of the instance was implied through the source from

which the data was drawn, with the newspaper content representing and clearly demonstrating improper use occurring en masse. By using popular instances, we assumed that trauma, as used in this incorrect and unstructured form, was widespread and recognized as socially legitimate everyday talk.

For Radstone (2007), the popularization of trauma is understood to be an answer to impasses experienced within an academic field by undisciplined and uncritical inquirers who do not notice how mistaken the trauma theory model is when applied in this setting. Like all interpretations, her response (or answer) to the problem of intelligibility results in an authoritative recommendation for possibilities for living. Given the lifeworld from which Radstone speaks, her recommendations for living center on possibilities from within the field of cultural studies and the humanities. Radstone (2007) arrives at her truth about the popularization of a particular model for recognizing and thus determining trauma in cultural content. The popularization of the model relies on two seminal texts resulting from the empirical method of citation analysis. With a sense of widespread adoption established, Radstone (2007) is oriented towards connecting lifeworld pressures to assumptions of the trauma theory model as routinely imposed within contemporary studies in the humanities and cultural studies. She demonstrates how one of the seminal texts (Caruth, 1996) is ultimately flawed beyond repair as a result of internal contradictions and a 'mistaken' application of traditional trauma theorizing and research. By means of her argument pointing to faulty theorizing that she confirms by means of revealing inconsistencies and flawed logic, Radstone (2007) claims that the flourishing of the trauma theory model has mistakenly enabled the establishment of a general theory of representation that has led to a mistaken pathologizing of everyday life within contemporary cultural studies and humanities scholarship. The model is accompanied by a celebrated, but mistaken, sense of overcoming lifeworld pressures. Radstone recommends a world (her lifeworld) that removes a general representational model for experiencing intelligible trauma formulations. In this way, each interpretation of the phenomenon of the popularization of trauma in contemporary society shows itself as (1) a worldly

experience that happens in and through language, and (2) an authoritative answer to a particular question collected by way of the establishing of the truth of understanding through a particular method for seeing.

Chapter 5: Doing a Popular Trauma Reading from within the Province of Human Practice

Newspaper content contains popular trauma talk. Reading it engages social members in its discourse. As interpretive happenings, popular trauma talk readings are necessarily oriented. They are directed by a particular Worldly existence from within which the reading experience takes place. The particular form of existence directing how a popular trauma talk newspaper reading occurs is a generic and anonymous Worldly existence.

As De Certeau (1984) points out, the newspaper's consumer is the "everyman" and "nobody" of society (p. 1). Characteristic of this situatedness is its central feature as the "common place where 'anyone' is finally silent" (De Certeau 1984, p. 5). The "everyman" is the reading social member situated in their existence as an 'everyone'. Such an existence is a generic form of living. It is a knowable situatedness in the everyday lifeworld as a member among one's contemporaries. It is an existence of oneself in their own beingness as one among a known many. It is a form of living that maintains the expectation for reality to be true, valuable and real, a relatedness in the appearance of the reader's placement in a known commonness among the many is required. Reading while existing in the world generically means that relations to the content read are made topographically from a 'just enough' casual stance.

Alongside of being everyone, the reading social member is situated in their existence as nobody. As 'nobody' the social member doing a newspaper reading is situated from within the position of existing as no one person in particular. Existing as no one in particular is an anonymous form of living. It is being-in-the-world *not* through one's own individual uniqueness. It is a way to be in the world with the preunderstanding to know how to exist, and therefore experience Worldly encounters meaningfully, in the form of non-localizable, non-identifying, authorship. Because it is a non-localizable nameless

position that demands a lack of individual identity; real, true, valuable meaning in this form of existing Worldly denies the need for inmate details for establishing a relation. In such an existence, then, a demand for an intimate form of knowing in the course of reading would generate trouble for the routine intelligibility of popular trauma talk. It would be outside of the limits of the possibilities from within this way of being-in-the-world in the course of doing a popular trauma talk reading.

Existing generically and anonymously while engaged in the activity of a popular trauma talk reading means that newspaper content is knowable as some *thing* to be encountered through an everyday practice of reading in a particular way. This 'particular way' directs how social members understand popular trauma talk when they are doing a popular trauma reading. Popular trauma talk occurrences in newspapers are Worldly confrontations that occur in and through the modality of reading. Through the course of poaching, modifications are made to what is written and by modifying what is read, social members develop a relation to what is written. The opportunities for modification are not infinite they are limited by the form of existence from within which the reading happens. As phenomenological hermeneutics contends, all interpretation is directed. There is no neutral position from within which interpretation can be drawn since the possibilities available for understanding are not infinite. Possibilities are instead finite in accordance with the particular form of existence from within which the confrontation with the world (doing a popular trauma talk reading from within the province of human practice) happens.

Reading popular trauma talk is an everyday practice. It is done for practical purposes from within the province of human practice. However, this province is inclusive of differing spheres of realities. It includes a plurality of combinations that orient understanding. Popular trauma talk occurring in newspapers, as De Certeau (1984) has noted, requires a particular orientation to that confrontation from within a particular Worldly existence. Available within the everyday lifeworld is the orientation to newspaper content from within a generic and anonymous Worldly existence. It is this

form of living that directs the consumption of such content as an everyday practice. It is this form of living that provides for particular possibilities for popular trauma talk that are unavailable within specialist horizons of understanding. It is this form of existence available within the everyday lifeworld that constitutes the reality of popular trauma talk occurring in newspaper content as it is engaged in and through the modality of reading. Further to this point, it is this form of existence that provides for the possibility of the full scope of trauma talk occurring in this discourse to be unproblematically relatable for everyday readers as true, valuable and real for practical purposes.

Reading popular trauma talk occurrences in newspapers requires an active engagement on the part of the reader. In order to do such a reading a social member must develop a relational context for both the content as well as the context of what appears in the course of reading. Poaching from the content and building a sense of the context happens when the reader modifies what is read in order to establish a relation to what is written. The possibilities for the relation established are limited by the finitude of understanding available within a generic and anonymous form of living because it is this particular kind of being-in-the-world that provides for the “constitution of reality” (Bonner, 1997, p. 61). It provides for the possibilities for intelligibility of the popular trauma talk newspaper reading worldly encounter. It is this basis for understanding that provides for “shared ways of looking at and shared ways of being in the world” (Bonner, 1997, p. 61) in relation to a popular trauma talk reading experience.

The intelligibility of the full scope of popular trauma talk occurrences in newspapers is not knowable to the reader in the everyday practice of reading because of a mastery over specific disciplinary conceptual schemes, knowing inner motivations of the originating writer, nor by the the assessment of the presence of a proper structural form. Popular trauma talk newspaper content is expected to be read, from within the province of human practice, as a reading experience being had by a generic anonymous social member engaged in the everyday practice of reading. Like all textual

experiences, the popular trauma talk reading experience “is an encounter between heritage in the form of a transmitted text and the horizon of the interpreter” (Palmer, 1969, p. 207). It occurs in and through language and is directed by the orientation of the reader (as active interpreter with a historicity and expectancies for the future). To the everyday reader, then, popular trauma talk in newspapers is knowable as some *thing* to be engaged with while existing within a particular form of living that directs the understanding available to be drawn from the interpretive process of reading.

The generic and anonymous Worldly existence within the province of human practice provides the horizon of understanding through which popular trauma talk is modified in the course of establishing a relational context. It is a way of being-in-the-world that is readily available to everyday members within the province of human practice. It is a known situatedness from which a popular trauma talk newspaper reading takes place. Remembering that differing spheres of life exist within the everyday lifeworld allows us to realize that that this orientation is not the only orientation possible for doing a popular trauma reading. For instance, the trauma specialist orientation remains a possibility for orienting to a trauma talk reading. However, in the case of popular trauma talk newspaper readings, the full scope of trauma talk is not unproblematically intelligible when this horizon of understanding provides the orientation for the doing a popular trauma talk reading in Canadian newspapers. Stated more directly, a generic and anonymous Worldly orientation provides the grounds for social members to develop the relational context necessary to unproblematically read the full scope of popular trauma talk occurring in Canadian discourse as intelligible.

In the course of the ordinary practice of reading, everyday members engage in an interpretive encounter with popular trauma talk as it is written using generic and anonymous social member orientation. Given that what is written in newspaper content is not of the reader’s own making, and that what is written is interpreted based on this orientation to the world; producing an intelligible reading of popular trauma talk from such cultural content requires the everyday member, as reader,

pre-reflexively exist Worldly as a generic and anonymous social member when doing a popular trauma talk reading. This reality for doing such a reading has implications for the openness of possibilities (or playfulness) available for intelligible popular trauma talk. This chapter works through these implications in order to come into a position to collect the full scope of trauma talk in contemporary populous discourse as intelligible from within the province of human practice. Characteristics of the modality of reading popular trauma talk unproblematically are analyzed. Features of this mode of operation are analyzed according to how they are directed by a particular Worldly orientation and how they provide for both the suspension of doubt of accuracy of meaning and an expectation of reciprocity among contemporaries.

Phenomenological hermeneutic principles require us to deeply consider the Worldly existence involved in the modality of a popular trauma reading from within the everyday lifeworld. Using this approach we recognize that the typically unproblematized and taken-for-granted living of the everyday lifeworld is characterized by wide awake social members suspending doubt about the accuracy of communication in favor of an assumption of intelligibility. For practical purposes, common knowledge is relied upon. Using various recipes for stock knowledge, social members pre-reflexively experience their world as routine. Using common understanding (including assumptions and beliefs) in the course of their everyday living, members routinely establish a sense of sufficient intersubjective and subjective meaning. Since stock knowledges frame the limits of the horizon of understanding for the everyday member in the course of reading, they are the root of self-understanding and are characteristically expected to be held in approximate commonness among contemporaries. The degree of commonality in shared understanding is anticipated to be sufficient for an expectation of shared understanding as had among social members in the course of reading.

The expectation of understanding as 'held in common' in a generic and anonymous orientation is particularly important. Embedded in this perspective is an expectation that other social members, as

readers in the course of everyday living, will themselves orient to what is available to be read in populous discourse generically and anonymously. And, in using this orientation while relying on the wisdom of stock knowledges, contemporaries are assumed to likewise develop a sufficiently approximate relational context for understanding what is written. Specifically, the reading member makes use of the content in the course of interpreting the reading and relating to the reading from within a Worldly existence that provides the opportunity for understanding that is plausible and reciprocal to that of another reading social member. As 'that which is obviously known' from within a Worldly existence, stock knowledge provides for both: a pragmatic taken-for-granted mode of existing (the knowledge to know to read as everyman and nobody); and an expectation of reciprocity whereby the relational context a reader develops when modifying the reading is anticipated to be sufficiently approximate the relational context established by other contemporaries in the course of reading.

Doing a Popular Trauma Talk Reading as a Generic Anonymous Social Member in a Casual Mood

Social beings *experience* themselves and the world in and through language. Marking this experience is participation in the world by way of establishing a relational context through which self-understanding occurs. Popular trauma talk is read with a generic and anonymous orientation while within a casual mood, not because there is a lax engagement with or passive receptivity to what is written, because, as our approach suggests, generating a relation is not a passive undertaking. It is not an empty absorption of what is written because in and through language the possibility for understanding is experienced in relation to one's situational existence. Language is not something that can be "consumed" without a relational context. Popular trauma formulations are intelligible simply because everyday members, through the modality of reading, have the grounds to relate and thus make relationality their own.

The reader takes neither the position of the author nor an author's position. He invents in texts something different from what they "intended." He detaches them from their (lost or accessory) origin. He combines their fragments and creates something unknown in the space organized by their capacity for allowing an indefinite plurality of meanings. (De Certeau, 1984, p. 170)

The natural ability of social members to create intelligibility from a reading, when immeasurable possibilities exist, is core to the practices of everyday living. For example, although a writer may attempt to present a trauma occurrence as an objectified case of trauma by aligning what is written with trauma specialist frames of reference, reading involves modification of what is written. It is doing something. Reading is not a passive receipt of words. It is instead an interpretive process whereby a relational context is produced by the reader. A relational context that stems from the truth, values and reality of living from a particular mode of existence. In turn then, reading a trauma occurrence from popular discourse, like that of a newspaper, requires modification done by the reader to what is written in order for sense for practical purposes to be made. "In fact, to read is to wander through an imposed system (that of the text, analogous to the constructed order of a city or of a supermarket)" and "every reading modifies its object" (De Certeau, 1984, p. 170).

As a specialized profession, journalism or television always assumes that the public is moulded by the products imposed on it. To assume that is to misunderstand the act of "consumption." This misunderstanding assumes that "assimilating" necessarily means "becoming similar to" what one absorbs, and not "making something similar" to what one is, making it one's own appropriating or reappropriating it. (De Certeau, 1984, p. 167)

Everyday members do not passively absorb what is written when they read. They engage the act of reading from within a particular Worldly orientation. They engage with what is written by

establishing a relational connection with what is read in an interpretive experience. Although this practice happens in a natural, taken-for-granted way, it is a process through which one understands him or herself, others and the world. The diversity, and full scope, of popular trauma talk is unproblematic to everyday members in the course of reading because they exist in a lifeworld where a plurality of possibilities is routinely available. They are not limited to and by a privileged vantage point. Not only do they not demand a singular proper form, they do not anticipate a singular opportunity as a possibility for a trauma reading. Yet the array of possibilities for an intelligible trauma usage does not typically create ambiguity. This is because one's Worldly existence in the course of doing a popular trauma reading and the stock knowledges available render a confidence that makes the intelligibility of the reading reasonably assured for the practical purposes of living.

Orienting to a popular trauma reading in a generic and anonymous way fosters a casual mood from within which the interpretive process of reading happens. A casual mood is a way being attuned to a popular trauma reading. It is a way of being both open to, and excluding of, particular possibilities for a popular trauma reading. The existence of such an orientation and mood is a resource that provides for multiple open possibilities for a trauma reading experience, and thus for understanding varied trauma talk in cultural discourse. Producing an intelligible popular trauma reading given its wide-variation, rests on the modern social member's ability to work within differing spheres of reality for establishing a relational context that are otherwise unavailable to the expert. While expert frames of reference are possible they are at the same time limited, as is the case with contextualizing popular trauma talk as facetious or ironic.

Popular trauma formulations are unproblematically, in a taken-for-granted way, intelligible from within a casual mood because this mood is grounded in the presuppositions of generic anonymous living as a social member. Generic and anonymous living requires the everyday member, situated as everyman and nobody, interpret and experience (and therefore self-understand) from a distance. The

distance that is created by the expectation of a generic anonymous reading, creates an absence of intimate contextual knowing, and thereby opens an interpretive space.

Popular trauma talk readings are not limited to frames of reference within the discourse of expertise because the distance of reading what is not of one's own creation creates a reading space that allows for a playfulness through which the tactic of modifying happens. When modifying the text in the modality of reading, social members subvert expert standards. In this subversion of expert knowledges, what would in the expert's finitude of understanding appear to be absurd is intelligible. Unlike the specialist orientation the generic and anonymous orientation is not rooted in a desire to essentialize to a proper form or a precise technical meaning. Popular trauma talk newspaper consumers from the province of human practice do not hold static or demand an inventoried proper form of 'trauma' as a term or as a concept. When engaged in the everyday practice of reading popular trauma talk in newspapers, social members are instead grounded in a fundamental desire to relate in a state of generic and anonymous existence while within a casual mood.

In the province of human practice everyday members demonstrate the intelligibility of the diversity of popular trauma talk. The presence of trauma talk occurrences in newspaper content illustrates the possibility of contextualizing what is written. Popular trauma talk occurrences relying on ironic or facetious contextualization by readers demonstrate the grounds for the everyday reader to subvert demands of experts by playing with what is written. By reading ironic and facetious popular trauma talk occurrences as unproblematic possibilities trauma talk everyday members show the tactical nature of reading. They show their ability to subvert formalized expert strategies for knowing trauma talk. By poaching readers relate to the text from their Worldly existence. They making it into something anew and ultimately resist a demand for formalized and stagnant knowledge. In a generic and anonymous orientation in a casual mood, everyday members resist the gravity of expertise. The tactical playfulness available to the everyday member in the course of reading within this orientation and mood

necessarily subverts the strategy of experts to essentialize or to restrict meaning to a proper form. Without poaching and the tactical playfulness it inherently creates, the full scope of popular trauma talk would be unintelligible.

By dismissing or ignoring the everyday member's modality of reading, experts miss the point about the primacy of language experiences. Further still, by questioning the phenomenon of the popularity of trauma as brokenness of a technical term or concept, experts miss the grounds for what makes an intelligible popular trauma talk reading possible in the first place. Searching for something essential and productive for a theoretical response prevents the opportunity to broaden the horizon of understanding held by the discourse of expertise. It blocks the expert's ability to develop a self-understanding of the resources available to members to take up and experience popular trauma talk tactically and situationally in and through language. Popular trauma formulations prevailing in newspaper accounts are language events that reaffirm relatedness to trauma in a generic and anonymous worldly existence. When doing a newspaper popular trauma talk occurrence reading in a generic anonymous orientation, the reading social member is enacting a space "to be other and move towards other" (De Certeau, 1984, p. 110) with a particular relation to trauma as it is modified in the everyday practice of reading.

The Primary Language Experience of Popular Trauma Talk in Mainstream Discourse

Understanding the social world, others and one's place in the world in and through popular trauma talk in newspapers occurs by means of an interpretive process. In order to develop an understanding of a popular trauma occurrence a social member must make the material read into something new (De Certeau, 1984), something to which one relates. Since all understanding is self-understanding, establishing a relational context for a trauma formulation in popular discourse is an interpretive *experience*. This experience happens in the course of the establishment of its intelligibility.

Intelligibility reached in the course of reading is the establishment of the relatedness made through the process of modification as a concrete possibility for existing in the course of doing a reading. In the case of newspaper trauma talk occurrences, this relation happens within an expected casual mood as a generic and anonymous social member doing a popular reading with a wide plurality of opportunities for understanding. Orienting to popular trauma talk in generic and anonymous way means that the member does not relate to the trauma talk through the presence of intimate details. Popular trauma talk is interpreted by virtue of distance because its generic and anonymous quality provides for this distance (as opposed to intimacy).

Distance when doing a popular trauma talk reading manifests as a particular kind of *space*. The kind of space that is opened up is a reading space. In a casual mood, the possibility that is opened up is a space wherein social members (as the everyman and nobody, rather than an individual per se) exist in a particular relation to the popular trauma talk occurrence. The relational context granted to the popular trauma formulation is oriented by the reader's Worldly existence as a generic and anonymous other. Moving towards the other, means moving into nearness with the otherness of the world. Here lies a difference for the literality of the specialist as compared to the interpretive process of the oriented social member in the modality of reading through which an everyman and nobody orientation to the World is the grounds for intelligibility.

Given that popular talk provides for a distance from what is written, the reader is presupposed to have the knowledge at hand to fulfil the expectation and anticipation of intelligibility for a popular trauma reading in newspapers. Also, because the social member, as reader, has the requisite pre-knowledge of how to do a popular reading, the everyday practice of distancing manifests in and through the language of the popular trauma talk reinforces this form of living as it is read.

Popular discourse demands that interpreters unproblematically use what is written. Assumed in this expectation is that readers will have the requisite knowledge necessary to interpret and render an

understanding of the trauma formulation without reflexive thought. They will be able to recognize the intelligibility of popular trauma talk without knowledge outside of the stock knowledge available to a casual interpreter. Popular talk relies on the opening up of a space, a reading space that is the scene of the situational interpretive encounter. Playfulness rests here. Inherent in this space are the finite possibilities available to the reading social member. These possibilities are the opportunities the social members has to develop a relation to the popular trauma formulation. Modifications to what is written, happening through the act of poaching in the course of reading, help the reader to develop their relatedness to what is read.

Playfulness is a feature of the casual mood that is opened by a generic and anonymous existence that colours the relational context available for intelligible popular trauma formulations. Occurrences from Canadian daily newspapers show the demand for this playfulness as a reading expectation. Particularly vivid examples of this expectation are the trauma talk occurrences that rely on a reader's ability to relate to what is read by contextualizing the trauma talk in ironic or facetious ways.

Particular to trauma discourse in newspapers are characteristic modes of operation for doing a popular trauma talk reading unproblematically. Everyday members do a popular trauma talk reading by relating to what is read by modifying what is written in an interpretive process. In the course of the doing of a popular trauma reading in newspapers, social members direct the modifying process by the form of living from within which the reading happens. This is a generic and anonymous Worldly existence in a casual mood. After analyzing popular trauma talk occurrences in newspapers, characteristic modes of operation for doing a popular trauma talk reading appear to be:

- an openness to what is read according to a web of relational possibilities from within which trauma talk can be experienced in the course of reading;
- an awareness of content topographically as it is related to through a procedural way of knowing;

- an awareness of an appropriate and adequate context suitable for shared understanding for knowing the presence of a trauma occurrence without the urgency for a requisite doing of something;
- a generalized and situational remembrance of the reading in its relatedness that lacks vividness after the reading experience yet is opportunistic self-understanding for future becoming; and
- flexible situational living in the awareness of social living as being in a continual state of becoming.

Beingness as a generic and anonymous social member in a causal mood affords readers the resources in their everyday lifeworld to realize the full scope of popular trauma talk in newspapers as lived reading experiences. Characteristic of this form of living are Worldly relations as true, valuable and real available via a web of possibilities rather than a closed structural form. Relating to the world in this way means for trauma that possibilities for experiencing a trauma talk occurrence are not grounded by the assessment of a degree of catastrophe sufficient to warrant a trauma designation, as the literality of trauma elites maintain. Such a limiting of this openness would result in the inability to unproblematically relate to the full scope of contemporary trauma talk present in popular discourse. Further, it would pull readers into an abstracting 'proper' form approach. It would require an objectifying orientation to such newspaper occurrences. Social members in the course of everyday living do not typically engage everyday content in this way. They instead read the content on the basis of anticipation of its intelligibility from within the pre-reflexive foundations of social life.

The wide variation in trauma talk within newspapers demonstrates that the generic and anonymous orientation provides a basis for an expectation of the possibility of a pre-given web of relations. At the same time, this wide variation illustrates an awareness on the part of the reader that the full extent of the plurality of possibilities for relation is not available for complete and full mastery.

Having a web of interrelated possibilities available means that the reader is open to recognizing that he/she is not an expert over trauma and that trauma is not knowable as a singular thing. Because reading is experienced as poaching, this openness is a pregiven possibility for popular trauma readers from within the province of human practice. By doing a popular trauma reading resourced by a web of possibilities to which a relation could be established, readers have the capacity to subvert the 'proper'. Subversion of the proper means the modality for doing a popular trauma talk reading happens with an openness to the plurality of relational connections. However, this does not mean that trauma is intelligible as anything and everything. An intelligible popular trauma talk formulation must be relatable as a possibility for a popular trauma talk reading experience. It must be of sufficient subjective and intersubjective meaning so as to be of expectedly approximate shared understanding among contemporaries. Therefore, because intelligible popular trauma formulations are oriented by a generic anonymous orientation, possibilities for an intelligible instance of trauma talk rest in the possibility for a personally meaningful and sharable relational context to be reached in the interpretive process. This possibility is a particular one given the orientation of the reading member when doing a popular trauma talk reading for practical purposes. It is the possibility that what is read is modified in a way that constitutes and reconstitutes Worldly living expectancies for trauma while existing Worldly as a generic and anonymous social member.

Rooted in stock knowledges are assumptions about generic and anonymous expectations for the course of living for social members as a whole. Concrete trauma talk possibilities in the course of the everyday practice of reading are those that disclose a breach to these expectancies. The relation established in the modality of reading, therefore, reinforces the realities of these generic and anonymous expectations for social living among contemporaries. Below are examples of popular trauma formulations that illustrate the integral and interdependent relationship between Worldly existence (generic and anonymous being in the world) and understanding in and through language (self-

understanding by way of established intelligibility in the course of an interpretive encounter with popular trauma talk).

What we get, to begin with, is the story of Johnny (Taylor Handley), a young man recovering from a major trauma. He was a good, well-adjusted kid until his dad committed suicide, in a gruesome manner, right in front of him. (Doyle, May 30, 2007, p. R3)

But for Mr. Davis and Mr. Wright, two middle-aged businessmen from Ontario, the harrowing flight would only affirm a friendship and a lifelong devotion to giving. Soon after the ill-fated flight, Mr. Davis would give up a lucrative business career and devote himself to philanthropy. "Something like that changes everyone," said Mr. Wright, now in his mid-60s. "It was all a little traumatic". (White, May 23, 2000, p. L.1)

The web of relational possibilities available to the social member in the everyday practice of reading from within the province of human practice is noticeable in each of the above popular trauma talk occurrences. For instance, in the first popular trauma talk occurrence we see a potential relational context of a parent-child relationship. Surrounded within this way to relate are everyday social expectancies of such relationships. This occurrence showcases a specific breach to the expected approximate shared understandings of social living for an everyday member. It is a possibility for relation within a generic and anonymous existence of a competent social member. In the second trauma occurrence a relational context of a social expectancy of reaching an established career position at the mid-position of life is available. It is this generic and anonymous shared expectation that is breached in this formulation. It is the breach, within the established relational connection, that the phenomenon of 'trauma' manifests and is disclosed in and through a primary language experience. To these points, let's be clear. Popular trauma talk is read from a generic anonymous orientation in a casual mood. This orientation and mood impacts how the reading is modified in the interpretive

process. However, the orientation and mood does not make popular trauma talk into anything and everything.

Trauma is intelligible as some *thing* in the modality of reading. It is some *thing* that makes generic and anonymous living appear and is disclosed in the rendering of its intelligibility unproblematically and in a particular way. This statement is not to say that trauma talk is readable only as something singular. Instead what is said here is that the opportunity for an intelligible popular trauma talk reading relies on the conscious presence, and the appearance of a breach to these expectancies thereof, of a particular relational context knowable within a generic anonymous Worldly existence. Popular trauma talk occurrences are intelligible as some *thing* that makes appear the breach to these relational expectancies in a particular way.

Since popular trauma talk is read in reference to a web of relations available to generic and anonymous social members through their everyday knowledges in that form of living, such readings happen in the same interpretive sense making process as everyday social living. Realizing that relations are historic, have a situational facticity and are projective, in these instances we see the foundations of practical social living. This web of possibilities to relate rely on expectedly shared ways of existing Worldly as a generic anonymous social member. This feature of social life is characteristic of how readers develop a relation to the talk in the everyday course of reading. When doing a popular trauma talk reading as an everyday practice, the reading is modified by an established connection to generic and anonymous expectations for social living. Trauma talk is treated as some *thing* as it manifests in and through language and is disclosed in its established intelligibility which is experienced in and through language. Experienced as an awareness made when relating in the course of reading means that popular trauma talk is able to be interpreted and self-realized as practical. Popular trauma talk is knowable as some *thing*, yet is open to varied possibilities that are sharable within one's Worldly existence.

Collected from within a web of expectancies for generic and anonymous social living and experienced as something in particular ('trauma') in the disclosed breach thereto, doing a trauma talk reading involves the appearance of some *thing* to be faced. But, because the encounter happens in the modality of reading, trauma is some *thing* to be faced at a distance. Much of popular trauma talk includes instances of a trauma formulations that an expert would find absurd. Yet it constitutes a concrete possibility in a web of relational possibilities in the Worldly existence of the generic anonymous social member. A topological, rather than intimate, knowledge is an interpretive feature relied on in the mode of action for doing an intelligible popular trauma reading. This interpretive feature is readily available to an anonymous social member in their casual mood.

Distance allows for the playfulness necessary to contextualize what is read as joking or facetious even when the subject matter may be of a serious nature. Although available for a joking or facetious contextualization, such readings sustain the appearance of intelligible trauma talk. This claim stands in support of De Certeau's advance that the notion of 'proper' language as what is used consistently in the way 'taught' by experts or specialized elites requires treating everyday members as mere receptacles for such 'teaching' (1984, p. 168). Orienting to trauma formulations such a stultifying way results in the privileging of trauma elites as 'producers,' and leaves everyday members as mere passive users or consumers who apply what they've been taught correctly or incorrectly, according to the judgements of the elites. Phenomenological hermeneutics provides a way to recognize such a perspective as taking a secondary approach to language since it is one that fails to take into account the inseparable connection between language and experience. Below is such an example of popular trauma talk unavailable from a discourse of expertise horizon, yet intelligible in the modality of reading from within the province of human practice.

So you thought only women had shoe angst? Think again. By their very conservatism, men's shoes generate traumatic issues all their own. Will that be lace-ups or slip-ons? Sneakers or

loafers? And god forbid you wear socks with sandals. The Globe's men's panel – Ian Brown, Mike Bullard, Russell Smith - jumps in feet first.

Ian Brown: Do you find buying shoes traumatic?

Russell Smith: I don't find any kind of shopping traumatic. I find the expense traumatic. Shoes are the most expensive item. So I find it nerve-racking but exciting. I love shoes.

Mike Bullard: I don't want to talk about it. I find it very upsetting.

Brown: Why?

Bullard: What I find upsetting is the fact that I know what I want before I go. I am not a trendy guy, so I know exactly what I want in the way of a shoe. And every spring they come out with all these different styles of shoes which you'll see in the remainder bin in the fall. But you can't find a brogue, you can't find a regular slip-on suede loafer. All the shoes change. (Brown et al., May 4, 2002, p. L.1)

As shown above, the possibilities for knowing the context from which the reading is read in order for appropriate sense to be made requires doing contextualization of what is read. Given the plurality of possibilities available within a web of possible relations for a popular trauma talk reading, context is necessary to get closer to a sufficient assurance of a socially shared understanding. Contextualizing to narrow the possibilities for intelligibility for an intelligible reading requires a dialectical back and forth in the process of developing an understanding in the course of reading. To develop self-understanding on the basis of context is necessary in order for the reading to be recognized as true, valuable and real (van Manen, 1977, p. 211-212).

A distance to what is written is opened in the modality of reading. When read from a generic and anonymous orientation the opportunities for an intelligible trauma formulation extend beyond the discourse of experts. The requirement of contextualizing in the modality of reading exposes the limits of the discourse of expertise horizon for understanding popular trauma talk.

Contextualizing is a foundational feature of social living. It is a fundamental feature for everyday living because of the plurality of possibilities for understanding made available by the multiple of spheres of life interacting within the everyday lifeworld. The expectation that readers will contextualize when doing a popular trauma talk reading is demonstrated by the opportunity to read popular trauma talk in a joking or facetious context. Such popular trauma talk highlights the reality that the modality of reading popular trauma talk as an everyday practice requires a mode of operation of contextualization by everyday readers. From this analysis it is clear that when unproblematically reading the full scope of popular trauma talk occurring in mainstream discourse, social members are aware of the need to contextualize and therefore of possible facetious use (for example) when it occurs. This practice contrasts sharply with expert perspectives.

Reading context requires a processual approach when *doing* a reading. Context is built iteratively. It is made through a building of understanding while within the process of reading whereby what is first read informs what is read thereafter and what is read thereafter in the occurrence informs the self-understanding of what was read firstly. Available to the generic and anonymous social member in the course of the everyday practice of reading, then, is the tactic of contextualizing. It is a wisdom to know that contextualizing is necessary in the course of popular trauma talk reading and to know how do contextualizing in the course of reading such content.

Contextualizing what is written in the course of modifying happens through a dialectical engagement with what is read. Developing a sense of knowing what is being said as it is interpreted and the anticipated intended meaning expected is rooted in the form of existence within which the reading happening takes place. In our case, this is the situational existence of the reading encounter as a generic and anonymous social member in a casual mood.

From a vantage point of distance contextualizing situational relations happening in the generic and anonymous existence in a casual mood is reflected in the commonplace maxim: 'You'll get through it.' This maxim is made readily available for contextualizing popular trauma talk because of (1) the form of existence and mood from within which the reading happens, and (2) the distance afforded in reading. As a readily available meaning making for practical living, this approach to doing a popular trauma talk reading suggests that time need not be spent on the interpreted situational reality. One need not arrest their mundane approach to living in the province of human practice when consuming such a reading because generic anonymous existence in a casual mood is situationally realized as one moves through it. Popular trauma talk consumed in the everyday practice of reading is not true, real, and valuable in a reflexive stance toward practical living. This does not mean that there is a lack of taking seriously of the interpreted trauma occurrence. Instead what is being said here is that popular trauma talk is an experience of self-understanding in the modality of reading characterized by a known possibility for living momentarily. Moreover, it is an expectation that resources *how* contemporaries will do a popular trauma reading. It is grounds an expectation that popular trauma talk is meant to be read as some *thing* to be moved through not some *thing* arresting to mundane living.

Popular trauma talk is experienced as a possibility for a breach to social expectancies for living. Given that trauma talk involves a vivid awareness of situational living (the momentary primary language experience happening in the course of reading) then, this talk read as momentary has implications for the intelligible popular trauma talk. Reading is a situational experience that is itself in motion. Being generically and anonymously orientated to popular trauma talk involves relating to what is read by knowing that generic anonymous living causally is a continual state of becoming. The interpreted trauma experience related to is experienced in and through language as a momentary situational possibility that is now, as it is read, is within a different temporality than at the time of its creation. As it is read it is something other than what it was as a situational occurrence, something different again

when it was written, and will further still be something situationally different in and through the situational reading experience. In short, movement characterizes how the popular trauma talk is read and how the rendering of intelligibility and the possibility for the full scope of trauma talk is made intelligible from within the province of human practice.

The modality of popular trauma talk suggests that the possibility for intelligible popular trauma talk occurrences for the practical purpose of living rests on the reader's ability to relate to their own existence as a generic anonymous social member as being in a state of continual becoming. A popular trauma formulation is one that discloses trauma as a socially relatable Worldly experience that one moves through in the course of living in a reading experience. Relatable in what is written is a breach to known expectancies for social living. The *moving through* done in the course of reading happens in the province of human practice. For example, below is popular trauma talk that highlights both how doing a popular trauma reading involves establishing relational connections to make sense of a Worldly encounter as a situational confrontation with expectancies for social living to be moved through. At the same time this instance demonstrates the capacity of everyday members, as readers, to contextualize given the plurality of possibilities for recognizing trauma talk as intelligible. In the trauma talk below, we see a reading experience that invokes an expectation of moving through. It involves a mode of action, in the social action of reading, that is situational and not requiring of action on the part of an individual reader since the reader reads from a distance as a generic anonymous social member in a casual mood.

The young woman was standing at the garden centre with a look of distress on her face.

"There's a worm on my lettuce," she said, "and the birch tree is turning brown." Obviously the realities of having a garden were being thrust upon her, and it was clear from the conversation that this was her first. If she survives the initial traumas, she will no doubt cope, as everybody else does at this time of year, what with the problems of getting plant to turn out blemish-free, just like the pictures in glossy catalogues. (Dawson, July 3, 1981, p. BL1)

When considered as reading done in a generic and anonymous orientation occurring in a casual mood, we see in the trauma talk above, that the vividness of a popular trauma talk reading experience rests in the constitution and reconstitution of the perpetual and inevitable movement of social living. Remembering that 'trauma' is not definable as a singular possibility means that trauma in popular trauma talk does not rely on a stagnant definition or a categorized level of calculated pain of a certain magnitude. Rather, its intelligibility is drawn from the appearance of difference between relatable courses of living rendered in the interpretive process of reading compared against ordinary approximate social expectations and reasoned anticipations for living as a contemporary social member.

The self-understanding that comes from establishing a popular trauma formulation is the appearance of a conscious awareness of the temporality of one's existence in a generic and anonymous relational way. Consuming an intelligible popular trauma talk occurrence requires that a social member, as reader, has actively produced a relational context whereby the reader, as social member, constitutes and reconstitutes their continual state of becoming within their generic and anonymous Worldly existence.

So far we have come to understand that popular trauma talk is a primary language experience. It involves an openness according to a web of relational possibilities. It involves the reader taking a position of distance to what is read. This distance is afforded by the space that reading provides. Generating self-understanding in this distance involves an awareness of the perpetual and inevitable movement of living which implicates itself in the intelligibility of popular trauma talk occurrences a primary language experiences; as some *thing* to be moved through. Following suit with the situational, distant, and momentary mode of action for doing a popular trauma talk reading, popular trauma talk requires a limited responsibility for intervention of the part of social members when engaged in the modality of reading. The popular trauma usage below demonstrates this operational character and

shows how reading popular trauma talk as intelligible means experiencing the reading as some *thing* to be moved through.

Police say the 97-year-old woman no longer lives in the apartment, but has moved in with her family. "She's apparently physically doing pretty well, but is still dealing with the emotional trauma of the event," Cpl. Baptista said. (Ligaya, May 24, 2000, p. S1)

The operational character of popular talk above suggests that trauma is something that must be moved through and lived with at a distance. Reading from a casual mood means that the vividness of the experience is read from a generic and anonymous social location that is foundational to social living. Drilling down to the bedrock of how life will be lived is not necessary when doing a popular trauma talk reading. What is needed instead is a self-understanding of the becoming of one's existence in relation to social expectancies for living from within one's being in the world as a generic and anonymous social member.

Having a primary language experience in a generic anonymous Worldly existence while in a casual mood provides for the possibility of a situational remembrance that typically lacks depth of detail. Remembrance afforded in the modality of reading is momentary. It is a situational relation tied to pregiven realities as it is momentarily lived in and through language in the course of reading. To consider what such a kind remembrance is experienced as let's think of being thrown again into a situation in which you are surrounded by contemporaries whom you have met only briefly in a past encounter. The remembrance of the previous meeting manifests itself. In between encounters, there is not typically an ongoing remembrance of the original brief encounter. Yet this new experience, with its difference now of knowing, is nevertheless understood, though not continuously or vividly present thereafter. In the second encounter, this knowledge comes in the form of a generalized remembrance. You anticipate it to be generally reciprocally available to the collective members in such future situations. Understandings generated by the original encounter inform your relation to the second

encounter. Such generalized remembrance is a tactical resource in the province of human practice. For instance, in the popular trauma formulation below, the casual remembrance of a possibility for such a meaningful trauma occurrence in the everyday lifeworld, is markedly present. It is a brief vividness of the otherwise known but unnoticed expectations for generic and anonymous living. When made into an encounter through the course reading, the otherwise generically and anonymously lived through social expectations for everyday living in one's sociality, inform the relation to the popular trauma talk occurrence and its potential for intelligibility.

Orbison's strength comes from a basic philosophy – be true to yourself, don't lose touch with life. "When I had a hit record, I didn't take to the bottle. I didn't stop reading, and doing what I do for hobbies. By the same token, when something traumatic would happen, I wouldn't change either. I'd go through the motions, and then pretty soon it becomes good again. You just go ahead with what you're doing normally to keep from going off the deep end or getting crazy". (General Interest, September 17, 1980, p. 15)

'Living through' casually, in and through language, requires engaging with the world in a way that is not confined to exacting details. A casual mood provides for a playful openness to possibilities beyond the trauma specialist. The following popular trauma talk is such an instance that illustrates the presence of this possibility in a popular trauma talk language experience.

During his vacation, he [Finance Minister Allan MacEachen] said, he had constantly heard radio reports on the decline of the Canadian dollar on U.S. markets. But Canadians "ought not to be traumatized" by the fall because the currency is doing "relatively well" compared with those of many other countries. (Walkom, Aug 8, 1981, p. 1)

Because casual living requires an openness, rather than a pre-determined certainty of being, the possibilities for an intelligible trauma formulation reading are opportunistic. Beyond practical

usefulness for constituting and reconstituting self-understanding of social expectancies among generic and anonymous social members, to which the reader is one, popular trauma talk readings have another practice use for everyday living. They are practically useful opportunistically. They are available as possibilities in the here and now that may opportunistically inform the future. They provide the opportunity for a situational Worldly wisdom as a proactive awareness. The self-understanding arising from the modification to what is written is an opportunity for a self-awareness for potential future troubles for generic and anonymous social living. For example, we see this opportunity is characteristic of the mode of reading such talk in the following popular trauma talk formulation:

...the flexibility intended under block financing has been of little use to Canada's four Atlantic Provinces, which cannot afford to expand their health services to include new programs such as drug and dental plans. "Since the block-funding concept appears to be firmly in place, the solution insofar as the have-not provinces are concerned is for the federal Government to cost-share the additional services that these provinces wish to institute." In another recommendation, the former judge called for an agreement among provincial health ministers to protect Canadians against excessive medical bills while traveling. Although benefits for a particular service would vary across the country, provinces should accept one province's rate as full payment for a service in such cases, he said. "In this way the health program would be truly nation-wide in scope, diminishing the trauma for citizens who fall ill or require services while temporarily away from home". (Laver, Sept 4, 1980, p. 1)

Reading happens as an interpretive process of modifying the text for the practical purpose of establishing a relation thereto. The experience of reading is, although unannounced and taken-for-granted, processual in nature. Since the reading happens within a generic and anonymous Worldly existence whereby the distance provided by reading a text not of one's own making opens a casual mood, the processual experience of reading is moderated by a casual awareness of the continual state

of becoming within this Worldly existence. In both of the cases above popular trauma talk involves reading not for the purpose of confirming static statements. They show that reading is not a passive act of absorption. They show that reading is an active process that relies on historicity, situational facticity and future projections in order for sense making to occur. Popular trauma talk, in other words, has practical use within the province of human practice. These occurrences are the subject of readings by everyday members as they move through the interpretive process of self-understanding that is naturally occurring. Moving through a reading by knowing that the generic and anonymous social member continuously moves through their existence in the course of living is a mode of action taken in the modality of reading. It is a characteristic of doing a popular trauma talk reading that provides for the taken-for-granted character of recognizing a popular trauma formulation as something to be moved through in the everyday course of living. It provides for a generalized remembrance that may be opportunistic for future self-understanding in one's Worldly existence as a generic anonymous social member in the course of reading from the province of human practice.

While the causal mood directs the reading of trauma in particular ways, the intelligibility of trauma talk in the course of reading is something that is disclosed, for what it is, within the myriad of possibilities provided by the generic and anonymous orientation. The tactics employed by social members in the modality of reading are invisible but nevertheless active. Realizing the operational combinations of the modes of action invoked for doing an intelligible trauma formulation shows a phenomenological hermeneutic contention. Doing a trauma reading as an everyday practice requires a willingness to live with an ambiguous object that can never be fully captured. Relational tactics used in the modification of readings to make sense of what is written show that possibilities for connecting to a reading are not objects to be experts over. They are not stagnant when a glimpse thereof is seemingly 'caught' appearing in action in the course of reading. Even though possibilities for an intelligible popular trauma reading are multiple this does not mean that intelligible popular trauma talk is available as

everything is anything. It does not mean that features of social life that provide for the intelligibility of popular trauma talk in the course of reading cannot be understood. For instance, popular trauma formulations are not to be construed as nonsense to social members in the everyday practice of reading. This talk is not recognizable to social members when reading as everything and anything, as the purveyors of expert discourse would argue. Each intelligible usage has a relational context embedded in the practice of everyday living as a generic anonymous social member in a casual mood. Popular trauma talk formulations are not free to be interpreted any way whatsoever, because such thinking does not stem from an understanding of language as primary experience. As we have seen in examples taken from Canadian newspapers, popular trauma talk is made intelligible by the activity of the generic anonymous reader. This reader is situated as 'everyman' and 'nobody'. Such a situatedness enables the reading social member to relate to the full scope talk occurring in newspaper content as the constitution and reconstitution of the possibilities available for a meaningfully true, valuable and real possibility for trauma talk in and through language. It is a primary language experience that manifests and discloses social expectations for generic and anonymous living in the course of the everyday practice of reading from the province of human practice.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Overall this work has centred on the task of getting into a position to understand the intelligibility of the full scope of popular trauma talk present in Canadian newspapers. It sought to understand how doing an intelligible popular trauma talk reading *happens* from within the province of human practice. It deeply considered foundational features of social life and the pre-given understandings that resource the modality of reading popular trauma talk from within a particular Worldly existence. The inquiry was initiated on the basis of two interpretive sociology claims. First, that social members naturally seek to generate subjective and intersubjective meaning of their Worldly experiences. Second, that all understanding is self-understanding reached by way of an interpretive process directed by a particular Worldly orientation.

In Chapter One, the reality of popular trauma talk in everyday discourse was questioned. The empirical reality that Canadians commonly confront popular trauma talk in the course of their everyday living practices was confirmed by the found presence of the term 'trauma' in Canadian major news dailies. Using a content analysis citation methodology, trauma was found to be word of significant presence in mainstream Canadian talk over the past four decades. Trauma talk occurrences were then considered according to an observed pattern of usage. Relying on contemporary trauma theorizing as frames of reference, the ability to collect an understanding of the fullness of popular trauma talk was noticeably unobtainable.

Chapter Two included a review of contemporary research and theorizing about the popularization of trauma usages in popular discourse and mainstream academic literatures. Ultimately, this review revealed that contemporary understandings about the popularization of trauma talk sidestep the meaningfulness of 'trauma' for everyday living. Given this miss the fullness of popular trauma talk was not collectable from within these horizons of understanding. It was recognized in this chapter that

everyday members do typically read popular trauma talk as intelligible within the everyday lifeworld. Not only do everyday members find popular trauma talk subjectively and intersubjectively meaningful, they also make use of its full scope even though it is seemingly absurd, misguided and/or irrational from within these contemporary disciplinary frameworks.

Chapter Three was a review of research and theorizing on the causality of the popularity of trauma talk. It revealed a need for an alternative approach for understanding how popular trauma talk is intelligible from within the province of human practice. In particular, the need for this approach appeared in the found absence of a deep consideration for the relational context relied upon by everyday members when establishing popular trauma talk as an intelligible possibility for living in the course of reading.

Chapter Four detailed eight phenomenological hermeneutic principles. The purpose of this detailing was to develop a way to get into a position that would provide for: (1) a way to analyze *how* social members *do* a popular trauma reading; and (2) the interpretive devices necessary to gain access to the foundations of social life resourcing the openness of possibilities for the full scope of popular trauma talk as a primary language experience. The phenomenological hermeneutic assertion that language and experience are inseparable, provided room to move away from popular trauma talk as representation, symbolic or as a functional communication tool. It provided a basis for recognizing popular trauma talk as intrinsic to and involved in the manifestation and disclosure of concrete possibilities in a particular Worldly existence. It animated the pressing need of this inquiry to collect the orientation grounding how popular trauma talk readings happen in and through a primary language experience. It provided for a way to analyze the unproblematic intelligibility maintained by everyday members in the everyday practice of consuming popular trauma talk in cultural content. By gathering the grounds for how a popular trauma talk reading unproblematically happens from within the province of human practice this chapter provided a position for realizing popular trauma talk not as a fastening of

words to an objectified experience; but the means in and through which a popular trauma talk reading experience happens from within a particular Worldly existence.

In Chapter Five the phenomenological hermeneutic approach outlined in Chapter Four was used to analyze how, through the modality of reading, everyday members make sense of popular trauma talk. The data used for this analysis was drawn from the popular trauma talk occurrences in Canadian major news dailies outlined in Chapter One. Combined with the theorizing of De Certeau, the key principles detailed in Chapter 4 guided the analysis of popular trauma talk otherwise uncollectable from the previous expert inquiries.

As a whole, this work contributes to: current social and professional inquiries into the phenomenon of the popularity of trauma; and to sociological inquiries, more broadly, that seek to gain practical access to the everyday practices of living. It provides empirical verification that trauma is a term of wide-spread use in mainstream Canadian discourse. It demonstrates the usefulness of a phenomenological hermeneutic approach in sociological inquiries that seek to understand how members 'consume' cultural content actively from within the province of human practice. It demonstrates how inquirers can gain practical access into the modes of action that are rooted in the foundations of social life. It shows that by taking *how* populous content that is read by everyday members seriously, as a primary language experience, inquirers can further develop their understandings of the Worldly existence of social members. Further, this inquiry clarifies that a primary language experience with popular trauma talk involves an awareness that the full scope of popular trauma talk is meaningful and intelligible when considered in the context of the lifeworld. Developing an understanding of the practical use of this talk has shown to require that the inquirer seek to understand the finitude of their own understanding that allows for certain possibilities for a trauma talk lived reading experience while excluding others. By recognizing the limits of one's finitude of understanding the inquirer may expand their self-understanding. However, doing so may require that an inquirer change one's self. Since

understanding is self-understanding, changing one's understanding may require changing one's self. That is, changing the possibilities that exist for a particular Worldly existence within the relational context that provides for the intelligibility of a reading. Because one's Worldly existence is tied up in the reader's playfulness for self-understanding, being open to additional possibilities as opportunities for challenging one's own possibilities, in this case, for a popular trauma talk reading experience, may be required. Without the opportunity for a negative dialectical relationship to one's own knowing, the inquirer's ability to self-understand the possibilities for an intelligible popular talk reading may be compromised.

Analysing popular trauma talk as a primary language experience has proven fruitful since by moving beyond abstractions for recognizing 'proper' forms of trauma, or of trauma talk more generally, several consequences were produced. First, such a focus meant avoiding the urge to hold any one possibility for a trauma experience as precious or privileged above all others. Second, it meant getting closer to what was said in popular trauma talk. Both of these consequences were germane to the phenomenological hermeneutic approach. By refusing to treat popular trauma talk as instances of correct or incorrect application of expert knowledges, the possibilities available for understanding popular trauma talk were recovered from the situational Worldly existence of the reader doing the reading. This provided a position from within which the full scope of trauma talk could be considered as a possibility for relating Worldly. It meant that the wide variation of trauma talk occurrences could be taken as intelligible as they were written. In doing so at question, then, was the typically pregiven features of social life (although concealed, unannounced and unspoken) that resource the intelligibility of popular trauma talk as it is engaged in the course of doing the everyday practice of reading. Ultimately this task involved actively problematizing that which was already seemingly intelligible. It required attempting to bring everyday existence, when in the modality of reading, out of its concealment by lighting it. This was done by making how a popular trauma talk reading happens

unintelligible. It was in this realm of concealment within the province of human practice, that the social inquirer was personally implicated. In this way starting with the premise that popular trauma talk is already intelligible to social members in their modality of reading meant fostering a negative dialectical relationship with what is characteristically unproblematically known to the inquirer as herself an everyday member. Attending to this premise was necessary in order to develop a way to see the everyday practice of modifying.

Third, it meant recovering the modes of action characteristic of readers when doing a popular trauma reading from within the province of human practice. Social member readers characteristically rely on the features of social living to do a popular trauma reading that happens within a particular Worldly existence. It was necessary to consider the modes of action for doing a popular trauma talk reading in order to collect how such readings are modified when establishing a Worldly relation to what is read. Characteristic of doing a popular trauma talk reading was collected as reading done by: establishing a relation through an openness to a web of possibilities; attending to the content topographically and procedurally; iteratively contextualizing what is read; processually reading and understanding; and reading opportunistically. Each of these characteristic modes of action for doing a popular trauma talk reading were analyzed according to how they were directed by a directed generic and anonymous Worldly existence from within which the situated reading experience happens.

Relying on principles of phenomenological hermeneutics, we have claimed language as a primary experience. Accordingly, our version of the language repelled a view of words as static or as a permanent thing in the world. It denied the idea of words as functional tools to be fastened onto an experience after an occurrence. Instead this approach fostered an understanding of language as a primary experience, as an interpretive Worldly encounter. It was an approach that presumed language to be the way in and through which a relational context is made from within a particular mode of existence. In this way everyday members are realized to produce intelligible popular trauma talk

occurrences in and through language which is realized as the manifestation of a Worldly experience of relation.

Also presumed through the phenomenological hermeneutic approach taken in this work was the belief that language constitutes self-understanding. In and through language, one understands oneself, others and the world. All understanding occurs through an interpretative encounter with language and is contingent on one's historicity and facticity being the basis for one's grasp of their relational context. It is directed by the orientation within which the language encounter happens. An interpretive encounter with popular trauma talk, and the intelligibility that results from it, occurs through the modality of reading.

The intelligibility of the full scope of popular talk was shown to be unavailable by analyzing 'trauma' according to an original structural form. Although attending to 'trauma' as content that is read, within the generic and anonymous Worldly existence the mode of reading a popular trauma talk occurrence requires a wisdom to know that its content is to be read topographically. Assessments of correct or incorrect usages (like the demand for a proper structural form or technical meaning) were shown to be untenable for developing an understanding the intelligibility of the full scope of this talk. This is because content in the course of the everyday practice of reading is modified on the basis of an orientation rooted in the particular Worldly existence from within which the reading takes place. To find words within such talk and to use these words as significations of meaning based on such an objectifying stance requires taking on a secondary, rather than primary experiential, approach to language. Nor was this sense of intelligibility available to be reached by concluding the overall intention of the original writer of a popular trauma talk occurrence. To do so would be to treat reading as a passive action of mere absorption. Such an approach would again remove the possibility for understanding reading as a primary language experience. Intelligibility, was instead presumed to be foreseeable within what was written. By getting closer to what is written, rather than by pulling up and

away from for conceptualizing, the intelligibility of popular trauma talk in newspapers was presumed to be understandable. Underlying this belief was the interpretive sociology premise that social members seek to render their Worldly confrontations meaningful. The task of this inquiry was to recover the grounds that provide for what is written to be an open possibility for a reader situated in a particular form of being-in-the-world. In the case of popular trauma formulations, the modality of reading was shown to be an interpretive encounter directed by a social member's Worldly existence as a generic and anonymous social member in a casual mood. It was shown that the experience of relation occurring in the modality of reading relies on this particular form of existence. The everyman and nobody situatedness of the reading social member provides the direction for experiencing popular trauma talk as meaningful. It enables the possibilities of popular trauma talk to manifest in particular ways. Meaningfulness of popular trauma talk happens, in the course of reading, when social members interpretively establish a relation to what is read. Intelligible popular trauma talk occurrences in newspapers are consumed readings. What is written has been poached and modified by an oriented reader in such a way that a relatedness to what is read has been established. By establishing relatedness with the popular trauma talk occurrence, in the course of reading, self-understanding is disclosed.

Contemporary expert responses to the popularity of trauma, privileged particular readers. Such readers are those able to produce a formally sanctioned 'proper' trauma formulation. Privileging the expert's form of knowing over all others ultimately reinforces their own power over the 'proper' as trauma 'elites' (De Certeau, 1984). Such 'strategic' (De Certeau, 1984) readers, like *Fowler's*, McNally, Radstone, and Fassin and Rechtman, recognize the 'true interpreters' of trauma formulations to be particular specialized experts. For *Fowler's* the orientation directing the truth, value and realness of trauma talk, makes the linguistic expert rooted in an orientation to words according to their original structural form the privileged reader for trauma talk occurrences. For McNally, mental health clinicians

who rigorously follow codified scientific procedure and method are the true interpreters of trauma formulations. For Radstone, cultural studies and humanities scholars who resist a topical accounting of trauma are the 'true interpreters.' For Fassin and Rechtman, social inquirers who connect patterns of select types of trauma talk to socio-structural practices and procedures are the 'true interpreters' of the language of trauma in contemporary society. In doing so, each:

interposes a frontier between the text and its readers that can be crossed only if one has a passport delivered by these official interpreters, who transform their own reading (which is also a legitimate one) into an orthodox "literality" that makes other (equally legitimate) readings either heretical (not "in conformity" with the meaning of the text) or insignificant (to be forgotten). From this point of view, "literal" meaning is the index and the result of a social power, that of an elite. By its very nature available to a plural reading, the text becomes a cultural weapon, a private hunting reserve, the pretext for a law that legitimizes as "literal" the interpretation given by socially authorized professionals and intellectuals. (De Certeau, 1984, p. 171)

By reinforcing 'what trauma *really* is,' or 'what a trauma formulation *really* entails,' trauma elites resist the everyday member's practice of reading. They mark such readings as being without the aid of a necessary specialized knowing. Or without even the 'freedom' (De Certeau, 1984, p. 173) for a primary language experience with popular trauma talk occurrences outside of the limits imposed by such expert knowledge. "It is thus social hierarchization that conceals the reality of the practice of reading or makes it unrecognizable" (De Certeau, 1984, p. 173). However, in the course of everyday living, the trauma expert is not the master of the social member's experience. In the everyday lifeworld the social member does not conform to the readings demanded by the trauma elite. Understanding produced for practical purposes is not the result of, nor is it constrained by, fulfilling requirements outlined by a selected master. Rather, understanding occurs in an interpretive process while being within a particular

situatedness within the province of human practice. The situatedness of everyman and no one is germane to a particular kind of Worldly existence from within which popular trauma talk readings happen in the province of human practice. The modality of reading popular trauma talk in newspapers occurs as the social member exists Worldly as a generic and anonymous social member in a casual mood. Generic anonymous social living in a casual mood provides models of action for doing a popular trauma reading and as such has implications for the openness of possibilities for a primary language experience with popular trauma talk in mainstream cultural content.

Social members relate to what is read, in the interpretive process of reading, by establishing a relational context. Possibilities for relation are not infinite. They are finite. Openness to possibilities for a real, valued and true popular trauma talk reading experience is limited to the situational opportunities for living available in the course of reading from within the particular Worldly existence. Generic anonymous being-in-the-world in a casual mood directs not only how the reading happens but also the characteristics of its practical use (its consumption). Consequently, popular trauma talk occurrences are not available as everything or anything. They are some *thing*. Popular trauma talk is intelligible as what it is because in and through a primary language experience the instance of a popular trauma talk occurrence manifests. In developing a relation to what is reading in the action of modifying, self-understanding of a popular trauma talk occurrence is disclosed. Both the manifesting and the disclosure of a meaningful popular trauma talk reading experience happens from within a particular Worldly existence. While specialist frames of reference for understanding are available to everyday members, they do nothing to bring the grounds for the intelligibility of the fullness of trauma talk out of concealment. Specialist frames of reference are but one recipe, albeit a significant one, for understanding popular trauma talk by way of abstraction.

For instance, in a random selection of accounts within one newspaper on a given day (*The Globe and Mail*, October 7, 2000), we can observe all kinds of expert discourse. We can treat each as a

potential categorical frame of reference. If made to fit, each could be readily applied to each of the 15 trauma formulations in order to make sense of what is said. Utilizing these frames of reference requires engaging with the formulations theoretically. Such an exercise would involve pulling up and away from what is said as it is said in order to interpret meaning through a process of abstraction and conceptualization. Phenomenological hermeneutics contends that such a rendering does not get us closer to the relation context unproblematically available to everyday members in their Worldly encounters because such a stance to everyday practices sidesteps the features of social life that provide for intelligibility. In conceptualizing, the inquirer must privilege the way in which expert discourse reckons with these formulations and the phenomenon of trauma. But such a process is a secondary approach to language. Adopting the perspective of the expert rather than that of the everyday member, as we have seen, results in an inability to grasp the intelligibility of popular trauma talk for what it is. Popular trauma talk is a primary language experience. It is an interpretive happening whereby a relational context is established based on the open possibilities available for a popular trauma talk reading experience from within the Worldly existence from within which the modality of reading occurs. This is the generic and anonymous Worldly existence.

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