Chapter 14

Person-to-Person Direct Transactions Between the Global North ↔ Global South in Social Videos: Exploration of Three Metanarratives of >, <, and =

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ABSTRACT

In first-hand social videos, people who move between the Global North and Global South share their own first-hand experienced stories through visuals and narration and a personality frame (and voice). Within these narrations about societal interfaces, there are stories of human transactions: tuition for learning (talent for tuition), money for products/services, money for travel and tourism, health interchanges, and friendship and conflict. These interchanges may be broken down into three metanarratives of the transaction: >, <, and = (greater than, less than, and equal to), or “who comes out ahead.” This work involves the visual analysis of selected personal social videos shared on YouTube to better understand the visual messaging around >, <, and = in Global North and Global South transactions and what these visuals in social videos might suggest about human-to-human social transactions, advantage-taking, and people taking each other’s measure, at the micro (or ego) level.

INTRODUCTION

When should a person cooperate, and when should a person be selfish, in an ongoing interaction with another person? Should a friend keep providing favors to another friend who never reciprocates? – Robert Axelrod in The Evolution of Cooperation (1984, p. vii)

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The “Global North” refers to developed countries which exist mostly in the Northern Hemisphere, and
the “Global South” refers to developing countries, which exist mostly in the Southern Hemisphere. At
the global level, there are many interchanges between the member nations within these two general
entities: diplomatic, trade, investment, labor exchanges, and others. Those interchanges are defined by
more formalized instruments like treaties and formal agreements. A less formal interchange involves
person-to-person interactions between peoples from both regions: the Global North <-> Global South.
Many have traveled broadly, and many have chosen to share their experiences through electronic word-
of-mouth and social video.

Some Lived Experiences

Forced tipping (under threat of violence).
The family has traveled to the receiving country in the Global South for a tourist adventure. They are
exploring a country linked to the family’s ancestral heritage. They visit historical sites that have historical
resonance. After a boat tour, the tour guides harass their charges for a tip. They are dissatisfied with
the initial offering, and they threaten to harm the family. The family holds firm, and they offer nothing
else. After a few more threats, the official tour guides stop pressuring the family. The family decides
not to report to the police, who are widely reputed to be corrupt. The family decides that there are better
places to visit, with higher levels of safety and security. >, <, or = ?

Beer drinking in a non-beer drinking zone?
A research team has gone abroad to conduct work relevant to the receiving country’s industries and
environment. One of the team members has a friend visiting from abroad. She takes him to a well-known
historical site. It is a hot day, and they see a beer seller, so they purchase beers, and they continue to
walk and sight-see. The police stop the two and press them to pay a large fine for imbibing in an area
where such activities are not allowed. The two know that they have been singled out because they are
foreigners. They see the request as a bribe. They try to talk their way out of the fine with their fledgling
foreign language skills. No go. They pay the fine (from a decoy wallet), and they leave. They tell this
story to colleagues, friends, and strangers. They feel like they got off light because they’d heard other
stories of much worse state harassment and bribe-taking. >, <, or = ?

Global sex tourism.
A young man has traveled abroad with a friend. They are both males in their 20s. Both come from
privilege in the West. They determine to explore the red light district of the receiving country in the
Global South. One picks a young female by number from a group of young sex workers sitting on steps.
In the small room, she goes through a ritual of having the customer wash himself with soap, and she does
likewise. (Soap and water do not prevent the transfer of sexually transmitted diseases/STDs or sexually
transmitted infections/STIs, of course.) The service involves a half-hour of illicit entertainment. The
transaction, initially, feels like a win. The price has not changed, and the service was provided. However,
this “secret” interaction results in the destruction of relationships into the future, changes in understand-
ings of human relationships, and long-term health effects. >, <, or = ?