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The Case of French Craft Training:

A methodological critique

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Introduction:

The validity of findings that emerge from arts educational research is contingent on the appropriateness of the chosen methodology. If the objective of a given research design is to understand the workings of an institution that is foreign to the researchers, then an ethnographic approach would be an appropriate choice. Though there are a variety of definitions of ethnography, it is generally described as a research methodology that involves long-term cultural immersion and observation. (O'Reilly 2012, Hammersley & Atkinson 2007, Creswell 2009) Ethnography is especially useful for arts educational research as it embraces subjectivity and allows for nuanced findings. Through this anthropological lens, researchers may become participant observers and gain a tacit understanding of their subject that can only emerge from an embodied practice.

In order to investigate how positioning oneself as a participant observer may facilitate more valid findings and a deeper understanding of a given institution than other methods, I will be critiquing “Les Compagnons du Devoir: a French Compagnonnage as a HRD system” by Hedley Malloch, Birgit Kleymann, Jacques Angot, and Tom Redman. This article, published in *Personnel Review* in 2007, is a case study of the Association Ouvrière des Compagnons du Devoir et du Tour de France (AOCDTF) - commonly known as *les Compagnons du Devoir* (CdD). The CdD is a brotherhood of traveling craftsmen that is “probably the oldest” vocational education and training (VET) program in France. The authors add that the CdD is “probably the largest private provider of high-skill vocational education training (VET) in Europe.” It is a household name in France known for preserving traditional craft and producing high quality workers. However, it operates under a veil of extreme secrecy which has given it the reputation of being a secret society or even a cult. The elusive nature of the CdD makes the association particularly difficult to research as evidenced by the absence of literature on the topic aside from three articles published by the authors. In this critique, I will demonstrate how the research design of the article could have reflected a deeper conceptualization of the CdD. I will argue that an embodied ethnographic approach would have been especially useful for studying the *Compagnons du Devoir*.

Though the article deals with analysing the efficacy of the CdD as a human resource development (HRD) system, it is also of arts educational importance as it is concerned with vocational craft training. Based on Swanson’s definition, the authors describe HRD as “a

process of developing and/or unleashing human expertise through personnel training and development for the purpose of improving performance [...] at group and individual levels”. By that definition, HRD can be understood as pedagogic.

Since the CdD largely operates by word of mouth and unspoken rules, there is a gap in the literature surrounding the association. The CdD is intentionally secretive to maintain the prestige that results from its exclusivity, so in many cases there will not be a written record to confirm the authors’ claims. In order to overcome this, I will compare the authors’ understanding of the association to that which I developed during my experience as an apprentice in the association for fourteen weeks. My goal in joining the CdD was to use the experience to inform my own arts educational practice while learning a craft. As a bilingual Franco-American, I was able to blend in while still approaching the CdD with the perspective of a foreigner. My position was that of an insider and an outsider – of a participant observer. I must stress that my experience may not be representative of other people’s experiences of the CdD. However, it does allow me to account for biases and motives that may have been overlooked by the researchers. Addressing this topic gives me the opportunity to compare the depth of my understanding of the CdD as a participant observer to that of the authors whose approach was arguably ethnographic but from an outsider’s perspective. In a sense, I am using my experience as a means of triangulating the authors’ findings. Triangulation is defined as “the checking of inferences drawn from one set of data sources by collecting data from others” (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007, p.183). It is an especially useful tool for ethnography as it is a means of confirming the validity of qualitative findings while allowing for nuance (Fetterman 1998). My objective is to take advantage of my unique perspective as a means by which to evaluate the article in the absence of relevant literature in order to explore the value of an ethnographic approach in arts educational research.

I viewed the CdD’s emphasis on precision and on-the-job training as a powerful model for embodied instruction. It reminded me that skilful use of the body as a means to an end is fundamental to the arts. Despite the embodied nature of artmaking, acknowledgement of the body was missing from my own arts educational experience. My time with the CdD compelled me to look towards craft training for insight on the value of embodied learning in the arts. My first essay for the MPhil degree was a transdisciplinary review of the literature surrounding embodied learning, or what anthropologist Tim Ingold refers to as “learning by doing” (Ingold 2013). Now, I am interested in approaching ethnographic participant

observation as a method for conducting embodied research. This will help inform the research design for my thesis which will involve participant observation in craft education.

Lastly, I should address ethical considerations. In conducting this critique, I will be revealing some of the association's workings to *profanes* – a term used by the CdD for people who have not been adopted by the brotherhood. Out of respect for the association, I will not describe any secret rituals, ceremonies, or terminology in detail. However, it is important that I describe the basic framework of the CdD as it relates to VET.

After one or two years of apprenticeship, *apprentis* (apprentices) undergo *la cérémonie d'adoption* (a secret “adoption” ceremony) and are presented with a *couleur* (a velvet sash branded with masonic symbols) and a *canne* (a walking stick), they become *aspirants* (aspiring journeymen) and officially embark on their *Tour de France* (tour of France during which workers travel to work in different firms once or twice a year). When *apprentis* become *aspirants*, they are considered members of the brotherhood and wear their *couleurs* and *cannes* to special events. Their *noms de baptême* (birth names) are replaced by *noms compagnonniques* (journeyman names), meaning that they are now addressed by the region from which they came. For instance, an *aspirant* from Paris would be called *Île-de-France* and that from Toulouse would be called *Toulousain(e)*. For other members to call *aspirants* by their actual names is considered disrespectful.

After three to five more years, they can apply to become *compagnons* (journeymen - the highest level of membership) after *la cérémonie de réception* (a secret “reception” ceremony) during which symbols are added to the *couleur*, ribbons to the *canne*, and qualifiers to the *nom compagnonique* chosen by the *anciens* (elders or alumni). Examples of how *noms de compagnons* reflect the association's core values include *Breton Cœur Fidèle* (Breton Loyal Heart), *Vendéen la Bonne Conduite* (Vendéen Good Behavior), *Berry l'Enfant du Devoir* (Berry Child of Duty), and *Rennois l'Amour du Travail* (Rennois Love of Work) (“Cayenne de Châteauroux” 2018). Each graduation is marked by the presentation of a work of craftsmanship to the association which is judged by *anciens*: the *travail d'adoption* and the *travail de réception*, respectively. These *travaux* decorate the *maisons* (a network of residential colleges) that *apprentis*, *aspirants*, and sometimes *compagnons* live in together as they work at nearby firms. Depending on the *corporation* (trade group), *compagnons* are sometimes asked to serve another year or two in order to keep their *compagnon* status.

The structure of this methodological critique is as follows: In Part I, I will develop a contextual overview to describe and locate the study and the perspective from which it was written. This section will begin to address key methodological concepts from a broad lens. In Part II, I will engage with a detailed methodological critique while evaluating how an ethnographic approach could have added depth to the study's findings. In the conclusion, I will recapitulate key concerns and reflect on the value of embodied research as it relates to craft education as compared to the methodology chosen by the authors.

Part I: Contextual overview:

The article that I will be critiquing is the second of three published by the same authors on the same topic, so it is important to describe all three. These articles reference each other frequently and, to my knowledge, represent the entire gamut of academic literature on the CdD available in English. At times I will refer to the other two articles as they have very similar content. This will provide necessary context for the study, allowing for a more thorough methodological critique. I will also take this opportunity to introduce the theoretical perspectives in this corpus.

In 1997, English engineering contractor Bill Steel came up with the idea of the International Journeyman Programme (IJP), an experimental VET programme for young English workers in collaboration with the CdD. Having hired French *compagnons*, Steel was impressed by their versatility, the quality of their work, and their attitude. He assumed that French VET was at a higher standard than that in the UK because the French workers surpassed the abilities of his own locally trained staff. Since having the *compagnons* on his team gave him a competitive advantage, he decided to send prospective workers to undergo CdD training for the sake of his own business. Ultimately, the IJP was a misguided effort based on an unproven assumption that the CdD is a better system than English VET. It ran into problems with recruiting English workers and failed to establish a lasting partnership with the CdD for lack of preliminary research. However, it did manage to introduce six workers into the system.

It is only after the project failed that researchers were brought in to investigate why. In 2005, Hedley Malloch, an English language lecturer at the School of Management at

l'Université Catholique de Lille, and Tom Redman, a lecturer at Durham University Business school, collaborated on an article entitled "A French model of craft training: its strategic relevance and recruitment issues for a UK firm". The researchers identify uncooperative state agencies as the reason for the program's failure after a series of interviews. However, the IJP's recruitment strategy involved drawing from the student body at English VET programs. The reason that it failed is more likely because these schools had no incentive to let go of their best students and their students had no incentive to interrupt the training they were already receiving. Furthermore, Steel's focus on using the IJP to improve his own business is counter to the CdD's philosophy of focusing on individual craftsmen rather than employers – another reason why his model could not have worked. An ethnographic understanding of the CdD would have made this clear.

Two of Hedley Malloch's colleagues at l'Univeristé Catholique de Lille, Birgit Kleymann and Jacques Angot, joined the aforementioned authors and together they formed the *Conseil Scientifique de l'International Journeyman Programme* (CSIJP). In 2006, they published the article that is the focus of this critique: "Les Compagnons du Devoir: a French Compagnonnage as a HRD system". Their focus in this 2006 paper was to analyse the CdD and to "identify reasons for its success as a [HRD] system." According to the article, the CSIJP "advised the IJP Steering Group on present and future policies. In this capacity the authors had unrestricted access to the main participants in the UK and in France." The case study rests on a series of interviews, mainly with the six IJP workers who were successfully recruited. As in the 2005 article, there is no evidence provided for the claim that the CdD is a successful VET program.

The objective of the 2006 paper lends itself almost invariably to an ethnographic approach in order to produce nuanced, accurate findings. Though the authors never explicitly mention ethnography, its relevance is acknowledged indirectly in the conclusion:

HRD and its supporting practices cannot be separated from the overall functioning of the organization. An institutional perspective of an organization and its HRD is required. This can only be fully achieved if it includes an anthropological view.

The CSIJIP published their last article together in 2008 entitled “The Dynamic of a Variably Coupled Social System: The Case of les Compagnons du Devoir”. Here, the goal was to define the CdD’s operations as a juxtaposition of tight and loose coupling. Put simply, the *Conseil* credited the association’s success to the flexibility offered by close internal activity and loose external activity. In this article, the authors use the same research design and data as in the 2006 study. That said, I will now move on to a close critique of the methods used to collect this data.

Part II: Methodological Critique

1- Research Question

The purpose of the study as indicated by the authors is to “describe and analyse the [...] CdD [...] and to identify the reasons for its success as a [HRD system]”. It would therefore be appropriate to gather data from a representative sample. Instead, the authors only collected data from those involved with the IJP - an experimental program that represents the exception, not the rule. A sample “should be a minimized representation of the population in terms of heterogeneity of the elements and the representatives of the variables. [...] The population should be clear and empirically defined” (Palmerger, M. & Gingrich, A. 2013, p.101) Drawing from a representative sample of the CdD would have allowed for more trustworthy findings. It is possible that *Conseil* only had “unrestricted access” to IJP participants and did not have access to French *aspirants*. It is also possible that access was restricted by a language barrier. However, access is not identified as a reason for the limitation of the sample. The researchers’ objectives would have been clearer had they explained why they chose to collect data from the IJP participants in order to answer their research question.

The reason why the purpose of the article is unclear originates in the ambiguity of the research question. If the goal is to identify reasons why the CdD is successful as an HRD system, then it is important to explain what success means for the purposes of the study. It would have been useful to clearly define a conceptualization of a successful VET program, bolstered by concrete evidence of success. An explanation would have solidified the research question, the resulting research design, and the findings.

Had the authors taken an ethnographic approach, they would have understood that the notion of success as it relates to the CdD is not so simple. Though the association has long been known for its excellence, site visits to one of the many *compagnonnage* museums or to see the *travaux* in the newer *maisons* would make it clear that the quality of the work produced by members is not held to the standard to which it used to be. In fact, the *travail de reception* (reception work), central to becoming a *compagnon*, was once referred to as the *chef d'oeuvre* (masterpiece). The change in terminology is telling. Had the authors done more preliminary research on the history of the CdD, they wouldn't have misunderstood that the term *chef d'oeuvre* is still used in the association. It is possible that a language barrier affected access to documents and CdD terminology, but if this was the case it should have been explicitly addressed.

There is an implied definition of success in the article with a mention that the association leads to employment despite "high levels of unemployment in France". This is true - but this fact loses much of its meaning when the number of drop-outs and expulsion is taken into account. This is not information that the CdD makes public to my knowledge; it could only be gathered through ethnographic participant observation. My *maison*, for example, housed fifteen workers of which five dropped out in four months time. In a third of a year, the workforce dropped by a third. Reasons for leaving included debt, injury, and dissatisfaction with the program. Expulsion is also common and usually has to do with drugs or sex.

Though the CdD has been around since the Middle Ages, women were only admitted in 2004. Women in the CdD are not acknowledged in the article, but they do appear in the 2005 paper. The authors misinterpreted the decision to admit women into the CdD as a means through which to make the training more attractive to young men rather than a long overdue step towards gender equality. Actually, some *anciens* feared that the inclusion of women would distract the young men from their work. I was told that members are brothers and sisters in the context of the CdD, so sexual relations are considered "incestuous" and result in immediate expulsion. These factors contribute to the CdD's very low graduation rate. I should also note that the only way to become an apprentice with the CdD is to get a job in the first place. Employment is the only screening process for admission, and it is very difficult to do. I sent my CV and portfolio to about a hundred firms before being offered a single job.

Workers who are persistent enough to join the CdD are likely to be persistent enough to find a job once they leave. There is no mention of the admissions process despite the 2005 study's focus on recruitment. All things considered, the rate of employment is not a valid measure of the CdD's success - a fact that would have been clear to the researchers had they collected more nuanced data by means of an ethnographic approach.

2- Methodology:

The methodology used in the article is described as:

A one-off case study of the CdD using data gathered by the authors in their capacity as members of the *Conseil Scientifique* evaluating a project to internationalise the CdD's approach to [...] VET. Primary sources include the UK apprentices who passed through the system, and employees of the CdD.

The first thing to point out is that a case study is not generally considered methodology, but rather a method that can be applied to a variety of methodologies, including ethnography. According to Bent Flyvbjerg, it can be argued that "if you choose to do a case study, you are therefore not so much making a methodological choice as a choice of what is to be studied." However, there is no academic consensus as to whether a case study should be considered a method or a methodology, so I will consider it a methodology for the purposes of this paper. (2011, p. 301) As far as "what is to be studied", the authors indicate that they are studying the CdD but are drawing data from UK apprentices from the IJP. This makes it unclear whether the focus of the case study is on the CdD as a whole or on the experience of IJP participants. It should also be noted that conducting a case study describing the experiences of "six youngsters" and one describing the experiences of the 10,000 workers the CdD trains every year represent two very different undertakings (Chesnel 2012). It is important to specify.

3-Research Design and Limitations:

The article describes the study's research design and limitations as follows:

The research design is a single case study, whose primary data is cross-sectional, and based largely on data gathered from UK rather than French apprentices.

Here the authors acknowledge that their sample poses a limitation, but they do not explain the reason for their focus on UK apprentices. They could also have elaborated on how this limitation affects the validity of their findings. Furthermore, the authors describe the research design as a case study based on cross-sectional primary data. Primary data are defined as “an original data source, that is, one in which the data are collected firsthand by the researcher for a specific research purpose of project” (Salkind 2010) It could be argued that the data presented in this article are in fact primary data, but only as they relate to the 2005 study concerning the IJP. It is unclear how they relate to the research question at hand. Next, cross-sectional data are defined as “data to make inferences about a population of interest [...] at one point in time. Cross-sectional surveys have been described as snapshots of the populations about which they gather data” (Lavrakas 2008). As the researchers did not draw from a representative sample to answer the article’s research question, the data might not be considered cross-sectional. However, it could be argued that they are as they relate to the 2005 study. It seems as though the researchers framed the research design around the IJP rather than the CdD despite the stated purpose of the study. Research design should reflect a clear strategy in service of answering the research question. If an issue like access gets in the way of creating an ideal research design, then the study should explicitly elaborate on why access is a limitation and how it affects the findings.

4-Methods:

The authors identify the methods with which they collected their data as a series of interviews, Nominal Group Technique, and site visits. The majority of the evidence used to identify the reasons for the CdD’s success comes from interviews with IJP participants about their experience of the CdD. The data collection is described as:

interviews with six youngsters [...] who lived and worked in the CdD for at least six months. [Each of the UK apprentices] was interviewed at least once. The interviews were semi-structured and focused on the apprentices’ life in the

Compagnonnage. They were recorded, the tapes were transcribed and then coded for items and themes of interest.

Semi-structured interviews are defined as “a qualitative data collection strategy in which the researcher asks informants a series of predetermined but open-ended questions. [This method gives researchers] more control over the topics of the interview than in unstructured interviews [while still allowing for more flexibility than structured interviews]” (Given 2008, p.810). This is the perfect method to use for the purposes of answering the article’s research question as it allows informants to direct their own focus with a framework determined by the researchers. Had the authors interviewed a representative sample, this method would have allowed for findings that account for nuance and bias. The *Conseil* adds that the interviews were coded for themes of interest. Coding, a process generally associated with quantitative research, involves analyzing and systematizing data to uncover “ideas, concepts, and categories” (Given 2008, p.85). The decision to apply coding to the interviews is an appropriate one, though the authors could have specified the themes that emerged from their analysis. Though it is possible that coding informed the content of the article, there is no explicit mention of the process beyond that in the citation above.

The second method used by the researchers is Nominal Group Technique. It is defined as “a structured group meeting conducted by a facilitator. It has four steps: generating ideas, sequential reporting of ideas, clarification of ideas, and ranking of ideas by importance” (Dean 2004, p.388). Because this technique involves informants brainstorming as a group, it is not an ideal method for studying the CdD. As I will explain in the next section, life in the CdD involves intense peer pressure, so group interviews are unlikely to produce accurate data. Furthermore, the informants involved in this method were “three cohorts of UK youngsters who completed all or part of the initial three-week programme of [the IJP].” These are early recruits who were not offered a place in the CdD as apprentices. Though this sample is of relevance to the IJP, it is unclear why these participants were included in this particular study about the CdD. As is the case with the coding of the semi-structured interviews, there is no explicit mention of the evidence that emerged from this method.

The final two methods used by the authors were interviews with “managers and trainers employed by the CdD, and non-*Compagnons* who employed and trained them in their factories” and site visits to the *maisons* in “Lille, Toulouse, Dijon, Lyon, Paris and Epône.”

These are excellent methods for developing an understanding of the CdD. Interviews with people who hold different positions and have varying relationships with the CdD create a much more representative sample than the IJP participants alone. It would be even better to also include the *apprentis*, *aspirants*, *compagnons*, and *anciens* as a means of triangulating the data with the perspectives of those most immersed in the association. It would also be helpful to specify the style of interview as well as the specific choice of informants. The site visits introduce the use of observation, an indispensable method for the “anthropological approach” mentioned by the authors. Again, evidence that emerged from these interviews and site visits do not explicitly appear in this study, though it is possible that the data are integrated into the article without an any explicit mention of the source. It would have been helpful for me as a reader to be guided through the various steps of the research and how they helped produce the findings.

5– Findings:

The study finds that the success of the CdD is made possible:

through the volume of off-the-job training; near-peer mentoring and peer mentoring, the systematic use of older and retired workers and the management of movement and change through a network of residential colleges.

The value of off-the-job training is underlined as a major reason for the CdD’s success in the article. The association features training that alternates between working in a firm for six weeks while living in a *maison* and going to a *stage* (job-training) in a *Centre de Formation d’Apprentis* (CFA) for two weeks. In both cases, there are mandatory study hours from 8PM to 10PM every weeknight and from 8AM to 4PM on Saturdays, though CFAs tend to be more lenient. According to the authors, study hours take place under the instruction of the *maître-de-stage* “in the House’s extensively equipped workshop and libraries” and sometimes involve teaching in “English, History, Art, Languages, Science, French, and Maths.” In theory, this time is devoted to homework, personal projects, and exchange when there is no class scheduled. In practice, most houses do not have workshops or equipment except in the case of the CFAs and study hours are not nearly as enriching as the article suggests.

In order to triangulate the data collected by the authors, I will elaborate on my experience of off-the-job training as a participant observer. This will also begin to address the unique psychology to the CdD, a topic that I will develop further in another section. Depending on the *rôleur* of the house (a *compagnon* resident advisor), workers may not be allowed to talk or work on projects that are not explicitly related to their trade. This is in stark contrast with the authors' understanding of this being a time of interdisciplinary exchange. In my house, study hours meant piling fourteen workers into a two-car garage and not letting them out until class was over. There was never any academic instruction apart from a French or Math teacher who came once a month. There was also an English teacher who left because wages were too low. The Academic portion of *compagnonnage* was infrequent and did not involve the range of subjects that the article suggests. However, this is entirely dependent on the location of the *maison* and the availability of teachers.

In the garage, there was no room to work nor any tools at our disposal aside from a box of leather scraps. Because I had not yet gone to *stage*, I did not have a toolbox of my own. I decided the best use of this time would be to apply to Cambridge - a decision that was met with much resistance. As I was working, I was given an assignment by one of my peers to make a presentation about different types of leather bags that I've noticed. I kindly explained to her what I was doing and that I would be happy to complete her assignment once I was finished. This sparked secret meetings about how I was not internalizing the *Compagnon* spirit which was followed by my being very closely supervised by my peers. They would constantly reprimand innocuous behaviour like spending the hour a day I had to myself alone, asking questions, or wearing clogs to dinner. This brings us to the peer-mentoring that the article cites as a reason for the CdD's success. It functions more accurately as peer-monitoring. As there is little to no adult staff in the *maisons*, members are encouraged to discipline each other. Peer-mentoring creates implicit competition surrounding being the most *compagnonnique* member, which expresses itself as bullying. As a result, forcing peers to put money in a jar if they use slang at the table and flipping their mattress if they forgot to make their bed is common practice. That said, a peer did teach me to emboss leather once, but that was rather unusual and outside of study hours.

Near-peer mentoring refers to instruction from the *maître-de-stage*. The *maître-de-stage* is only there to guide study hours during the *stage* as the title of the position suggests.

The authors' assumption that they are a fixture in every *maison* is inaccurate. It is unclear what exactly was done during the site visits, but it seems observation – a critical component of ethnographic research - was not involved. During my *stage*, the *maître-de-stage* did not offer us study hours because she was not being paid for her time which was considered a part of her *devoir*. Low pay is the same reason why the association couldn't find a *maître-de-stage* for my cobbler friends, leaving them without job training for five months.

Another form of near-peer mentoring is that which is offered by the *anciens* (elders), local *compagnons* who have moved out of the house but continue to be engaged in the community. *Anciens*, who are said to be *sédentaires* (not on the *Tour*), are perhaps part of the most meaningful tradition in the CdD provided that they are still actively practicing their craft. Note that *anciens* and *sédentaires* are not names for two different kinds of members as they were misunderstood as being by the authors. As the article points out, only about half of *compagnons* remained in their trades in 1999. That is certainly not a reflection on the CdD's success as it relates to training workers to contribute to a specific field or to preserving traditional craft. That said, I met an *ancien* who started out as an upholsterer and later became an architect. He said his exposure to builders has proven to be very useful on job sites. I also sat in on cobbling workshops held by an *ancien* who is one of the last shoemakers in France to carve his own lasts out of wood and was impressed by how supportive he was of my peers and how generous he was with his time. This is an instance in which the concept of *devoir* shines the most. A generous *ancien* provides an inspiring sense of what the quality and culture of the CdD used to look like. However, access to these *anciens* is entirely dependent on proximity and on how much of their time and effort they are willing to give for free. Some of them are only ever around for the parties. This is one of the many ways in which the quality of the CdD experience is largely based on luck – another facet of the culture overlooked by the researchers.

6- Other Considerations:

Despite approaching this study of the CdD as a HRD system, the authors do not investigate the members' quality of life thoroughly enough. There is clearly an interest in this topic since the semi-structured interviews served to understand the IJP participants' experience of life in the CdD. There are even mentions of financial hardship and the CdD's reputation as a cult in the article, but these are never developed. Had the researchers

approached the CdD from an ethnographic perspective, they could have developed a much more nuanced conceptualization of what *compagnonnage* is like. Had they also positioned themselves as participant observers, they would gain a tacit understanding of the unique psychology that comes with life in the CdD. Such an understanding would allow them to formulate a research design that could account for bias, motives, and emotion. An evaluation of the success of the CdD as a HRD system could only benefit from a simultaneous acknowledgement of its weaknesses.

The most obvious source of stress for member of the CdD is financial insecurity. *Apprentis* and *aspirants* earn a certain percentage of the minimum wage depending on their age and rank. I was earning eighty percent of the minimum wage in a factory while producing around 5,000 EUR worth of luxury belts and wallets a day from start to finish. In the article, the authors indicate that in 2006, the *apprentis* earned “[577 EUR] net a month”, “house charges were [450 EUR] a month”, and “there were tool allowances available, but these rarely covered full cost.” To give an example of the cost of tools, I was charged 600 EUR. My peers advised me to always have my checkbook handy because I would often be asked to write checks to the association, and I was. In addition, the CdD heavily encourages members to have their own cars for their *Tour* because of the frequent traveling from *maison* to *maison*. All of these factors contribute to the fact that many members struggle with debt. The salary and fees contribute to what the authors referred in their 2008 study as “financial handcuffing”. The system is exploitative of young people, many of whom join the CdD because of academic difficulties. The authors do not explore how this might negatively impact the lives of members, commenting only that there is no need for money as members work so much that they do not have any free time to spend it anyway.

Finally, the constraining rules, structure, and mentality of the CdD make life in the brotherhood emotionally difficult. My schedule allowed for one hour a free time a day after I got home from the factory and before dinner which I chose to spend alone. Members were allowed one weekend a month to themselves provided that they can offer a valid reason for leaving, preferably independent job training. On Sundays, there were community field trips that were presented as optional but were actually compulsory. As I was initially unaware of this, meetings were had about how I was a *renard communautaire* (a community fox). I was routinely asked to read in common spaces rather than in my room. This dynamic was established so that I could easily be watched by my peers even outside of structured time. As

I was not only a participant but also an observer, I would ask about the reasons behind certain rules which my peers interpreted as me questioning their authority. My being a foreigner was met with suspicion and made me a target for what was essentially hazing. I quickly learned that it was easier to keep my head down, do as I was told, and anticipate any reprimands my peers might direct towards me in order to avoid being watched any more closely. This is how the CdD enforces discipline without needing to employ any adult non-*compagnon* staff: not by peer-mentoring, but by peer-monitoring. I had no time to introspect or think for myself, and there even came a point where I became comfortable with having every decision made for me.

Though the CdD is not a cult or a sect, it has that reputation for a reason. Though the article describes a VET program that focuses on the individual, the near-military structure of the training and the assignment of new names to members paints a different picture. Add to that the secret rituals, songs, clapping, terminology and symbolism – vestiges of the masonic roots of the brotherhood – and it is no wonder why the CdD has such a reputation. However, its religious undertones are reflected in tradition rather than in practice, so it cannot be considered a cult or a sect – though it is fair to call it a secret society. There is pressure from within the association for its members to speak positively of the brotherhood, especially for those in higher positions: the *compagnons*, *prévôts*, and *maîtres-de-stage*. These members are employed by the CdD as representatives of the association, so they are likely to present a biased and inaccurate account of the way it operates. Had the researchers positioned themselves as participant observers, they would gain an understanding of the psychology behind the CdD's operation that would allow them to account for varying motives when they chose the subjects of their interviews. This would have provided them with a richer and more accurate understanding of the reasons for the CdD's success as a HRD system.

Conclusion:

The article represents a commendable attempt at understanding the mysterious CdD. The case study enlightened the brotherhood as much as it could have from an outsider, or “etic”, perspective. However, had the authors taken an ethnographic approach and positioned themselves as participant observers, they would have gained a much more accurate sense of *compagnonnage* from an insider, or “emic” perspective. (Fetterman 1998) An embodied approach to the research would have equipped the authors with insight from a tacit

understanding of the CdD – including an acknowledgement of the physical and emotional exhaustion of its members, an awareness of unspoken rules and an ability to account for bias. Ethnography would have been especially useful because “we cannot undertake ethnography without acknowledging the role of our own embodied, sensual, thinking, critical and positioned self.” (O’Reilly 2012, p.100)

My goal in writing this paper is not to expose the CdD nor to expose the authors. The CdD is an important part of my heritage with a rich history of elevating the blue-collar worker, promoting vocational training, and preserving traditional craft. These causes are all dear to my heart. There are many small ways in which the association could be vastly improved, and art educational research is a valuable tool for identifying and implementing them. In turn, the CdD represents a compelling model of embodied instruction that arts education can learn from. As we have seen, the CdD – known for its secrecy – is resistant to being studied. However, it is based in a rich tradition of heritage and technical excellence and deserves to be studied more closely. I certainly applaud the authors for taking on such an intimidating and difficult subject.

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