

**Everyday Life Information Seeking:
Approaching Information Seeking in the Context of “Way of Life”**

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The study offers a framework for the study of everyday life information seeking (ELIS) in the context of way of and mastery of life. Way of life is defined as the “order of things,” manifesting itself, for example, in the relationship between work and leisure time, models of consumption, and nature of hobbies. Mastery of life is interpreted as “keeping things in order;” four ideal types of mastery of life with their implications for ELIS, namely optimistic-cognitive, pessimistic-cognitive, defensive-affective and pessimistic-affective mastery of life are outlined. The article reviews two major dimensions of ELIS, there are: the seeking of orienting and practical information. The research framework was tested in an empirical study based on interviews with teachers and industrial workers, eleven of both. The main features of seeking orienting and practical information are reviewed, followed by suggestions for refinement of the research framework.

Until recently, studies of *nonwork information seeking*, sometimes also called *citizen information seeking* have been overshadowed by surveys of job-related information needs, seeking and use. However, one may argue that questions of nonwork information seeking deserve equal attention. In general, practices of nonwork information seeking may be associated with a plethora of important activities not related to professional tasks, for example, health care and hobbies.

Studies of nonwork information seeking, conducted in the United States, date back at least to the 1970s. Extensive surveys were made to investigate citizen information needs and seeking, for instance, in Baltimore, Seattle, and New England (Chen & Hernon, 1982; Dervin et al., 1976; Warner, Murray, & Palmour 1973). Since the late 1970s, the conduct of large-scale surveys has become infrequent. Their findings resembled earlier surveys listing the most

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common information needs and the most frequently used information sources and channels. The surveys revealed, for example, that people tend to prefer informal sources and that they rarely seek assistance from public libraries to solve their everyday problems. However, some surveys, in particular Dervin et al. (1976) included a number of fresh ideas to approach practices of information seeking from the viewpoint of an individual in the context of everyday life.

As qualitative research methodologies gained more popularity in the 1980s, ideas of information seeking as a part of everyday life practice began to attract new attention. However, compared with the flow of surveys focused on job-related information seeking, studies of nonwork information seeking still remained small in number. This study attempts to contribute to this little cultivated area of information-seeking studies by suggesting a new approach to nonwork information seeking in the context of way of life. The article is based on two research reports available in Finnish (Savolainen, 1993a, 1995). The former study developed a research framework and the latter is an empirical study utilizing that framework.

This study introduces a research framework in order to clarify some basic concepts of nonwork information seeking. The suggested framework prepares the ground for a substantial analysis of individual and structural factors of information seeking, as well as their intermediation. Second, the study tests empirically the fruitfulness of the suggested framework with a view of refining it. The study, if explorative by nature, aims at critical consideration of the prospects of nonwork information seeking studies.

BASIC APPROACHES TO NONWORK INFORMATION SEEKING

In order to introduce the research framework, it is necessary to discuss at first some basic research strategies which seem to be most central to studies of nonwork information seeking. A broader review of theoretical and methodological assumptions of various research approaches concerning the nature of information and human beings as information seekers is omitted here (for this discussion, see Dervin, 1994).

Dervin and Nilan (1986) made a major divide between the system-centered and user or individual-centered approaches to information seeking and use. They criticized the system-centered approaches which, in their crudest form, reduce information seeking to library use being predicted by demographic variables such as sex and education. Dervin (1983, pp. 167-168) claimed that conclusions drawn from these studies are rather trivial, reiterating, for example, the fact that the more educated the citizen, the more likely he or she will make frequent use of library services. Dervin (1983, pp. 166-167) also took a critical stance toward some individual-centered approaches, which predicted information seeking by personality traits such as open- versus close-mindedness, or other dispositional factors which are seen as relatively stable. She pointed out that the findings of these studies are far from consistent and are mostly devoid of any general theory which would tie the numerous data points together. Dervin (1983, pp. 169-175)

preferred an individual approach. It conceptualizes information seeking and use as situationally bound constructing activities, thus avoiding the problems arising from the assumptions that information seeking is cross-situationally consistent, based on personality trait theory, or demographic facts. The limitations of using socio-demographic variables such as race as predictors of information seeking were also revealed empirically, thus emphasizing the advantages of situationally bound approaches (Atwood & Dervin, 1981).

The alternative offered by Dervin is the sense-making theory, which tries to avoid the "false dichotomies" of structure versus agency in the prediction of information seeking (Dervin, 1992, 1993; see also Savolainen, 1993b). The sense-making theory draws an insightful picture of the ways by which individuals make sense of their experiences in problematic situations. Dervin employs the metaphors of *situation*, *gaps*, and *uses* to depict information seeking and use as a sense-making process. Metaphorically, the situation stands for the time-space context where one becomes aware of the insufficiency of his or her earlier definition of situation. Gaps refer to questions or information needs thus elicited and gap-bridging to processes of information seeking and use as the construction of a more proper definition of the situation. Although the sense-making theory draws heavily on metaphorical formulations it has gained empirical support, which strengthens the hypothesis that information seeking is a constructive process based on the utilization of categories of situation, gaps, and uses.

Indisputably, the sense-making theory has opened new vistas to studies of information seeking. Although the theory focuses on the individual sense-maker, it does not deny that structural factors may affect individual sense-making processes. Because these processes are approached on a rather general level, focusing on "generic" characteristics of human information seeking and use, questions dealing with the substance of individual characteristics of information seekers, as well as socio-cultural determinants of information seeking seem to deserve closer attention than addressed in the sense-making theory. There are substantial issues concerning the cognitive competence of information seekers as well as the socio-cultural factors affecting that competence. Compared with the basic assumptions of the sense-making theory, this study takes one step toward more substantial issues of information seeking, however, trying to avoid individualistic or sociologist traps as criticized by Dervin.

BASIC CONCEPTS

Way of Life

In general, the theoretical framework of this study is informed by the theory of *habitus* developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1984, pp. 170-175). This theory seemed to be useful because it provided a background for the conceptualization of information seeking as a natural component of everyday practices. According to Bourdieu, *habitus* is a socially and culturally determined system of thinking,

perception, and evaluation, internalized by the individual. Habitus is a relatively stable system of dispositions by which individuals integrate their experiences and evaluate the importance of different choices. Habitus has a dual character. On the one hand, it can be seen as a generative principle of objectively classifiable judgements (habitus as a “structuring structure” which organizes different dispositions). On the other hand, habitus is a system of classification of these practices (habitus as a “structured structure” which divides things into different groups according to their value). In this dual role habitus manifests the incorporation of norms and social expectations within an individual; thus, habitus is more than an aggregation of “purely” personal dispositions. As a socially and culturally intermediated system of classification, habitus renders a general direction to choices made in everyday life by indicating which choices are natural or desirable in relation to one’s social class or cultural group.

As a system of socially and culturally determined dispositions habitus forms the base on which one’s way of life is organized. Because habitus is a highly abstract concept serving as a general background to this study, the concept of *way of life* is introduced to describe the practical manifestation of habitus. Way of life, together with the related concept of *mastery of life*, is the basic context in which problems of nonwork information seeking will be reviewed. It is somewhat problematic that there is no consensus among researchers concerning the definition of way of life; the terminology is complicated further in that some researchers, for example, Bourdieu (1984) use the concept of *life style* for way of life (see also Mitchell, 1984). The major difference between these concepts is that way of life is mainly constituted through everyday activities and their mutual valuation whereas life style primarily refers to “surface” elements of way of life, for example, consumption and dressing, emphasizing one’s individual likings in the analysis of choices made in everyday life (see Roos, 1986, p. 38). This study views way of life as more appropriate because it concentrates on the substance of choices made in everyday life, allowing the review of their social and cultural determinants. Thus, attention may be paid to both objective and subjective elements in the constitution of everyday life.

Way of Life as “Order of Things”

In its most general sense, the concept of way of life refers to “order of things,” which is based on the choices that individuals make in everyday life. “Things” stand for various activities taking place in the daily life world, including not only job but also necessary reproductive tasks such as household care and voluntary activities (hobbies); “order” refers to preferences given to these activities. Order of things is determined on both objective and subjective grounds. An example of objective grounds is the length of the working day, which determines the amount of daily leisure time, whereas perceptions of the most pleasant ways to spend leisure time refer to subjective grounds of order of things. Because in most cases order of things is a relatively well-established constellation of work and nonwork

activities taking place during a day or a week, one easily takes this constellation as the most natural or normal way to organize his or her everyday life.

Correspondingly, people have a "cognitive order" indicating their perceptions of how things are when they are "normal." Through their choices individuals have practically engaged in a certain order of things, and it is in their interest to keep that order as long as they find it meaningful. One might see this as an indication of inherent conservatism of everyday life but basically there is nothing unnatural in it. Even though people often seek variation in life, particularly in leisure time, the recreative elements are usually sought in "managed" ways; totally uncontrolled behavior just for a change is an exception. Thus, it seems that at least implicitly most people seek after an internal coherence of everyday things because it gives them better chances to plan their choices and act meaningfully.

The Operationalization of Way of Life

Because the extension of the concept of way of life is rather broad and includes heterogenous elements, differing strategies may be used in its operationalization (Erämettä, 1990, p. 156). For example, the nature of leisure-time use can be utilized in the description of way of life. This study is interested in the most relevant components of way of life which may be useful in the study of everyday life information seeking, not in the problems of the exact operationalization of the concept.

The concept of way of life was operationalized by taking the following factors into account: the *structure of time budget*, described as a relation between working and leisure time, *models of consumption of goods and services*, and *nature of hobbies*. The structure of time budget reveals the proportions of time spent on work, necessary activities outside work such as household care, and hobbies (e.g., sports, television watching, and book reading). By analyzing the models of consumption one may draw a picture that indicates the part of money spent on the acquisition of various goods or services, for example books and tickets for sports events. The analysis of hobbies sheds light on the substance of way of life because the nature of hobbies informs us of the things which people find most pleasant; the analysis also reveals the role of informational interests, for instance, newspaper reading in leisure time. Taken as a whole, the structure of time budget, models of consumption, and the nature of hobbies are assumed to characterize one's way of life, that is, the order of things which is meaningful or to which one has to adapt. Adaption refers to the fact that order of things is not always wholly in accordance with one's wishes; external factors may determine it. For example, a worker may be engaged in working in three shifts in a factory which limits his or her opportunities to participate in certain hobbies.

Mastery of Life

Because the meaningful order of things might not reproduce itself automatically, individuals are required to take active care of it. *Mastery of life* is this caring activity. So far the terminology concerning this concept is quite entangled; for example, psychologists and sociologists employ related terms such as *life management*, *managing one's own life*, *life control*, and *coping* to describe this subject (see, e.g., Krohne, 1988; Söderqvist & Bäckman, 1988). Although *mastery of life* may have some grandiose connotations, it implies the importance of coherence of the life project at large. The alternative terms were rejected due to their rational overtones or even calculative connotations ("control" and "management") regarding one's general orientation to everyday life.

Mastery of life may be either passive or active. It is passive when people are satisfied with seeing that everything goes on as expected, at least on the whole. Active mastery of life is associated with pragmatic problem solving in cases where the order of things has been shaken or threatened. Mastery of life is a general preparedness to approach everyday problems in certain ways in accordance with one's values. According to Antonovsky (1987), a general requirement for the positive mastery of life is a *sense of coherence*. It refers to one's pervasive and relatively enduring feeling of confidence that the stimuli deriving from internal and external environments are structured, predictable, and explicable; that one has adequate resources to meet the demands posed by these stimuli, and that these demands are meaningful and worthy of engagement. Comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness of stimuli are qualities to the concept of sense of coherence and through that concept, positive mastery of life.

The Development of Mastery of Life

One is born in a culture within a social class which gives basic models for mastery of life. These models concern typical ways of approaching everyday problems, for example, concerning the degree to which they are perceived as cognitive or emotional issues. The culture with its specific values not only directs habits and attitudes to working life but also to spending leisure time, for example, the role of book reading and television watching. Naturally, in addition to specific social classes those evaluations are affected also by the generation to which one belongs.

Along with socialization to a class-based culture, the individual will do things in certain ways. As a result, the daily practices of everyday life begin to establish themselves in a natural order, being perceived as self-evident. The concrete examples received at home and at school influence this developmental process. If the order perceived as meaningful is disturbed so that there is a need to put it on the right track, experiences received from the resolution of problems will yield feedback of the effectiveness of problem-solving abilities and the sufficiency of the cognitive competence. Simultaneously, one receives experiences concerning the usefulness of different information sources and channels in the solving of everyday

problems. These experiences may affect the information orientation of the individual and lead to certain information-seeking habits. As a result, a profile of information orientation will be developed, that is, a set of attitudes and dispositions towards information seeking and use in certain problem situations. The habits of information seeking form a part of mastery of life, often rooted in an unconscious level and not wholly subject to reflection. In terms of Giddens (1984, pp. 21-23) the habits exist as a part of practical consciousness.

Mastery of Life—A Typology

Important factors molding mastery of life are the ways by which individuals orient themselves in (typical) problems situations and seek information to facilitate problem solving. By specifying these orientations, a typology of mastery of life can be sketched. The specification is made by analyzing two dimensions that centrally describe qualities of problem-solving behavior. On the one hand, the dimension of *cognitive* versus *affective* indicates the degree of rational considerations in a problem-solving situation. A cognitive orientation emphasizes an analytic and systematic approach to problems whereas the affective orientation refers to its exact opposite: an emotionally laden and rather unpredictable reaction to issues at hand. The second dimension, *optimism* versus *pessimism*, describes the expectancy towards the solvability of the problem. This dimension occurs in four classes: unreserved optimism (no setbacks expected in problem solving), reserved optimism (some setbacks anticipated), reserved pessimism (failures anticipated), and unreserved pessimism (failures seen as unavoidable). The cross-tabulation of these dimensions yields four ideal types of mastery of life with implications for information-seeking behavior.

- *Optimistic-cognitive mastery of life* is characterized by a strong reliance on positive outcomes for problem solving. The individual believes that almost any problem can be solved by focusing on a detailed analysis, resulting in the selection of the most effective instruments that contribute to the optimal solution of the problem. Because problems are primarily conceived as cognitive, systematic information seeking from different sources and channels is indispensable.
- *Pessimistic-cognitive mastery of life* differs from the former in that the objectives of problem solving are set in a less ambitious way: the possibility that the problem might not be solved optimally is accepted. Despite this the individual may be equally systematic in problem solving and in information seeking which serves it.
- *Defensive-affective mastery of life* is grounded on optimistic views concerning the solvability of the problem; in problem solving and information seeking affective factors dominate. This is manifested in that the individual may avoid

situations implying a risk of failure or easily fall into wishful thinking instead of realistic considerations. This style of mastery of life is, in part, problematic because it is not always clear how this type can be located on the dimension of optimism versus pessimism: the degree of optimism and pessimism may vary from situation to situation. However, the optimistic mood is predominant because the individual has a positive conception of his or her cognitive abilities, despite some failures in similar problem-solving situations.

- *Pessimistic-affective* mastery of life can be crystallized in the expression of “learned helplessness.” One does not rely on his or her abilities to solve everyday life problems, but adopts a strategy of avoiding systematic efforts to improve his or her situation. Drifting from day to day and searching for instant pleasures are characteristic of this ideal type of mastery of life. Systematic information seeking plays no vital role here because emotional reactions and short-sightedness dominate problem-solving behavior.

The implications of the typology will be discussed later in the light of empirical findings.

Everyday Life Information Seeking (ELIS)

As to the third basic concept, the subject area of *nonwork information seeking* is ambiguous. One of the difficulties lies in that the concept is residual by nature: nonwork information seeking deals with something that is not associated with daily work or activities occurring at the working place. On the other hand, issues of job-related and nonwork information seeking tend to overlap; for example, seeking information concerning language courses may serve both professional ends and leisure-time hobbies. Furthermore, job-related and nonwork information seeking share other features, for instance, the tendency to apply the principle of the least effort in the consultation of information sources and channels. In any case, there is need to a specific concept to clarify the distinctive features of nonwork information seeking. For example, substantial questions which are central in the analysis of formal channels consulted by academic scientists may not necessarily be useful in the study of information seeking connected with a person's attempts to find a new job.

The concept of *everyday life information seeking* (ELIS) emphasizes the legitimate nature of the nonwork contexts. Terms such as “nonwork information seeking” and “citizen information seeking” are abandoned because the former is clumsy to use, and the latter is rather narrow in that it primarily refers to people's rights and obligations towards social institutions as voters and so on. The introduction of the concept of ELIS should not be interpreted as an attempt to create a false dichotomy between processes of job-related and “other” information seeking because job-related information seeking and ELIS complement each other. Broadly defined, the concept of ELIS refers to the acquisition of various

informational (both cognitive and expressive) elements which people employ to orient themselves in daily life or to solve problems not directly connected with the performance of occupational tasks. Such problems may be associated with various areas of everyday life, for example, consumption and health care.

The ways by which the individual monitors daily events and seek information to solve specific problems are determined by values, attitudes, and interests characteristic of their way of life. ELIS receives its meaning through these values, attitudes and interests. In most cases, the relevance of different information sources and channels is evaluated on the basis of their familiarity and effectiveness in information use situations. Because different information sources and channels are perceived as familiar or unfamiliar in the context of way of life, their use becomes natural or even self-evident in certain problem situations. No wonder that ELIS seems to be often directed by unreflected assumptions concerning the availability of certain channels and sources and the easiness of their use.

THE RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Figure 1, which crystallizes the research framework being tested in empirical research, illustrates the relationships of the basic concepts discussed above.

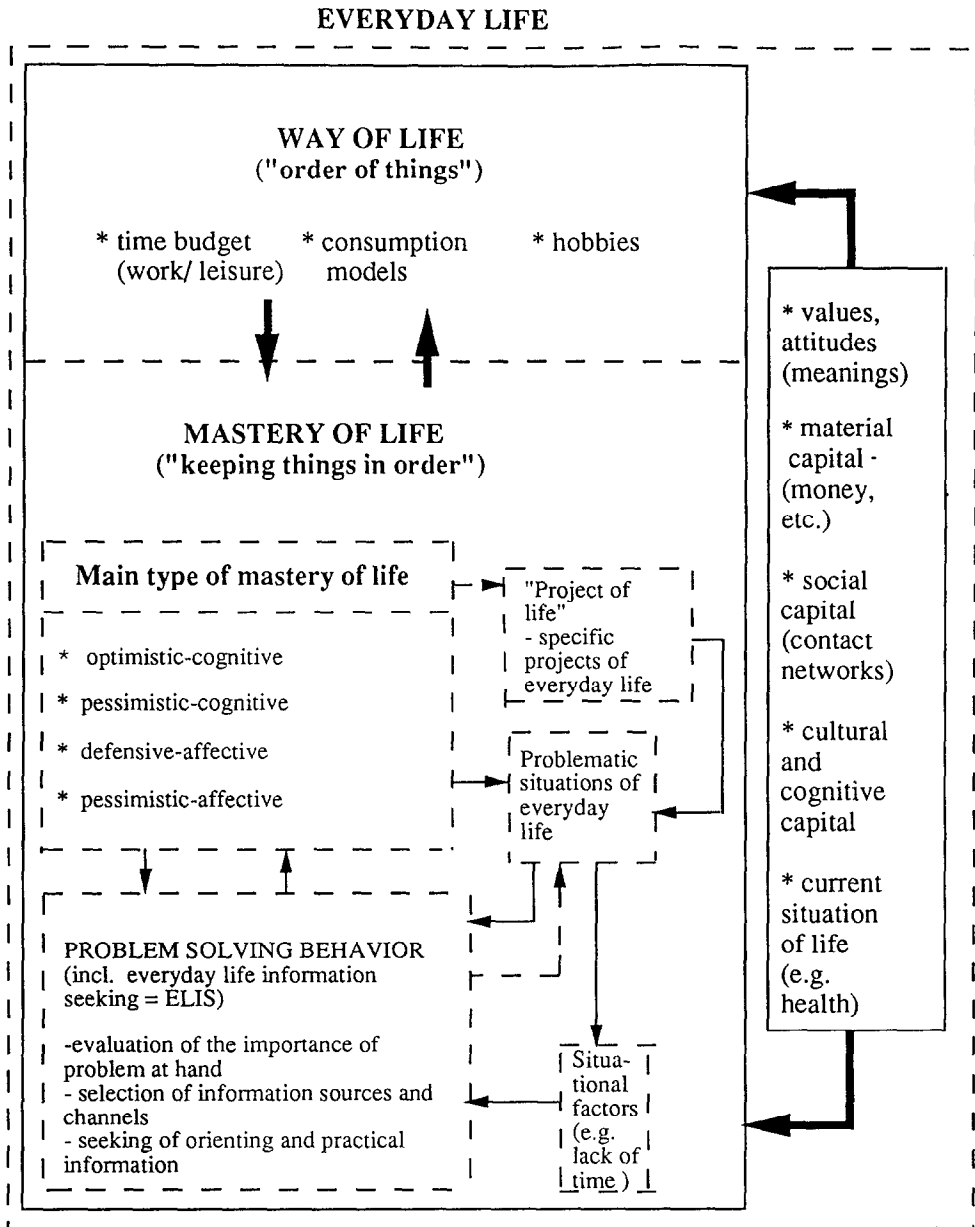
Way of life ("order of things") and mastery of life ("keeping things in order") determine each other. Values, conceptions, and the current phase of life affect way of life and mastery of life. Equally important is the material, social, and cultural (cognitive) capital owned by the individual, providing "basic equipment" to seek and use information. The distribution of the different kinds of capital in relation to capital owned by others determines the total value of the material, social, and cultural capital, thus determining the basic conditions of way of life and mastery of life.

Way of life or mastery of life are not alone enough to tell how a person seeks information in individual situations. As a constellation of everyday activities and their mutual valuation, way of life provides only general criteria for choosing and using various information sources and channels in that it indicates which choices are natural or even self-evident in the light of earlier choices. Similarly, the identification of the type of mastery of life may not necessarily reveal, in detail, how a person seeks information in the context of everyday life: the nature of mastery of life describes the tendency to adopt a certain information-seeking strategy in problem-solving situations. In order to analyze more exactly the information-seeking behavior associated with problem solving it is also necessary to take account of the specific features of the problem situation, for example, the repertoire of information sources available and the acuteness of the problem.

THE EMPIRICAL STUDY: OBJECTIVES AND DATA

In order to validate the ideas presented above, the investigator conducted an empirical study based on theme interviews. The role of way of life in the direction

Figure 1
The Basic Components of the Study of ELIS
in the Context of Way of Life



of information seeking was studied by comparing two groups whose ways of life were assumed to differ markedly enough on the basis of social class. Following Bourdieu's (1984) ideas it was hypothesized that sociocultural factors shape significantly order of things (way of life) and the practices of its reproduction. The level of education and the nature of professionals tasks were assumed to be factors that most distinctly produce differences in ways of life of social classes. Furthermore, as hypothesized in Figure 1, factors which significantly structure way of life and ELIS practices are the relationships between work and leisure, models of consumption, and the nature of hobbies. In addition, the individual factors, as well as characteristics of the current situation of life were taken into account because, otherwise there would have been a risk of falling into sociology which explains information seeking by merely referring to class position (see Morley, 1992, pp. 56, 69). Bourdieu's (1984) analysis suggests that class position is importantly reflected in the nature of leisure time use and the role of accumulating cultural capital. Studies by Eskola, Roos, and Kortteinen (1978) and Chatman (1985, 1991) were useful in that they discussed the relation between the way of life and information-seeking practices of working-class people.

The empirical study compared the ELIS practices of people belonging to the middle class and working class. These classes were selected because, it was assumed, that they differ most markedly in regard to social and cultural capital acquired; this difference was expected to manifest itself in ways of life and styles of mastery of life, and through them in ELIS practices. Although in today's Finland one cannot find particularly sharp cultural differences between social classes, and although ways of life of social classes seem not to differ so clearly as for example, in France, Finnish middle and working classes do have sufficiently distinctive characteristics also regarding ELIS practices (Mäkelä, 1985, pp. 253-255). On the other hand, it seemed that those differences do not dwarf meaningful comparisons.

The overarching question addressed in the empirical study is "are how practices of ELIS directed by way of life and mastery of life?" It is assumed that way of life and mastery of life are structured by a set of social, cultural, and individual factors. This set of factors includes material, social and cultural capital owned by informants. Material capital refers to purchasing power, social capital to the nature of contact networks, and cultural capital to cognitive resources acquired through education and life experience. In addition, the nature of job was briefly reviewed because it affects the structure of time budgets and the nature of hobbies.

The specific questions addressed in the study are:

- How do way of life and mastery of life determine ELIS practices in regard to seeking orienting information?

- How do way of life and mastery of life affect ELIS practices in regard to seeking practical information that serves in the resolution of specific problems?
- What is the value of the above research framework in the study of information seeking?

Data were gathered in the fall of 1993 by means of theme interviews with 22 people living in Tampere, a Finnish inland town with 175,000 inhabitants. The interviewees were selected from two social classes so that workers (industrial workers) and middle-class informants (teachers) were in equal numbers: 11 people in each group. On average, the interviews lasted 1 hour and 30 minutes. The themes focused on the nature of job, consumption models, ways of leisure time use, practices of seeking orienting information from various media and values attached to information and information seeking in everyday life. Finally, informants were asked to choose a problematic situation encountered recently; this critical incident was analyzed in regard to problem-solving behavior and seeking of practical information.

The data were analyzed by qualitative content analysis. The class positions of informants were defined objectively on the basis of their occupations, not subjectively by asking them to give their opinion about the social class to which they think they belong. The age of the informants varied from 29 to 61 years; the mean age of industrial workers was 48 years and of teachers 44 years; therefore, the majority of informants was middle-aged. Sixteen of the respondents were women and six men. Except for two, all were married; on average interviewees had two children. Because the informants were purposefully selected to represent opposing social classes regarding amount of cultural capital, their educational levels differed markedly. The majority of workers had passed elementary school and had some vocational studies, whereas the teachers had various university degrees, ranging from baccalaureate degrees to master's degrees in education or other disciplines.

OVERALL FEATURES OF WAY OF LIFE

The teachers worked in elementary schools and vocational institutes, the workers in major industrial plants manufacturing paper and textile products. Of the workers four had an eight-hour working day, six were working in two or three shifts which sometimes also required working on weekends; one worker had lost her job just two weeks before the interview. The teachers' working day lasted on an average from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. In addition, most teachers had some "homework," for example, preparation of the next week's lectures in the evenings and on weekends.

In general, the informants' ways of life were quite well established at the time of the interviews; all were fairly satisfied with the current order of things except

one interviewee who had recently lost her job. Two workers and five teachers estimated that their current economic situation is good; four teachers and six workers were fairly satisfied with it, and one teacher and one worker complained that their economic situation was really weak. Most informants felt that the economic recession prevailing in Finland since the early 1990s had affected their consumption habits, leading to more careful consideration before purchasing decisions. For example, frequency of travelling abroad was decreased and subscription to some magazines was discontinued.

Although some informants even felt that everyday life is too habitualized, no one desired changes for themselves. In most cases, work was the most central factor determining everyday routines. As expected, workers seemed to take a more instrumental stance towards their jobs compared with teachers, emphasizing its role as a necessity to earn one's living. In turn, teachers valued more the substance of professional tasks and also saw their performance as a challenge. The majority of informants felt that work and leisure were well balanced, and no one claimed that "real life" begins when working hours are over.

Differences between social classes proved to be quite as expected regarding the nature of work, relationships between work and leisure and nature of hobbies. Workers' and teachers' ways of life had several common traits, for example, in the areas of housing and purchasing of consumer goods. Watching television was also a uniting factor giving rhythm to the spending of leisure time among workers and teachers as well. Hobbies associated with physical exercise were also a common factor affecting ways of life in both groups. Of course, there also appeared to be some differences between social classes to the extent that we may speak, even though not very emphatically, of the ways of life of workers versus that of middle-class people.

The study revealed that ways of life varied somewhat among informants and their families. The most distinctive differences regarding the structures of time budgets were found in the analysis of relationships between work and leisure time; working in shifts appeared to be the most significant factor because it hampered, for example, television viewing. However, with some exceptions, both teachers and workers felt that they had sufficient time for their hobbies, including informational pursuits, and most informants were quite satisfied with the ways they spend their leisure time. Thus, lack of leisure time per se may not be the most significant factor determining the intensity of ELIS but rather the ways by which people set priorities for free time use is most important. Rather expected differences were found in the nature of hobbies. Teachers appeared to be more interested in literary pursuits, whereas workers preferred activities requiring handiwork. The consumption models of interviewees did not differ very much pertaining to necessary goods such as food stuff or clothes. Differences were more distinctive in the purchase of books, magazines, and newspapers; as expected, teachers spend more money on these. Features of way of life will be specified further in the analysis of seeking orienting information.

SEEKING ORIENTING INFORMATION IN EVERYDAY LIFE

In the review of ELIS one can devote attention to its two dimensions, first, to *seeking of orienting information* concerning current events and second, to *seeking of practical information* which serves as the solution to specific problems. The distinction between seeking of orienting and practical information can also be found among the studies of job-related information seeking. For example, Mick, Lindsey, and Callahan (1980) speak of "nutritional needs" and "applicational needs;" the former refers to the needs and seeking of orienting, the latter of practical information. The distinction between orienting and practical information seeking serves analytic ends—in real acts of information seeking the dimensions of orienting and practical information may be closely intertwined. However, the distinction is useful here, because it makes possible a more specified analysis of ELIS practices in the context of way of life.

Main Aspects of Monitoring Everyday Life

Mastery of life was defined as caring activity manifesting itself as pragmatic problem solving, including information seeking and use as its integral component. Mastery of life aims at elimination of continual dissonance between perceptions of "how things are at this moment" and "how they should be." If there is no dissonance, mastery of life goes on quite routinely and information seeking attached to it can be characterized as a rather *passive monitoring* of everyday life events. In other cases mastery of life may grow to active problem solving which aims at restoring the disturbed order, usually requiring *active seeking of practically effective information*.

The passive monitoring of everyday life events can be conceived of as a life-long activity focused on the care of everyday matters. To keep things in meaningful order, and to change them as required, it is necessary to engage in continuous overall monitoring of various events occurring in the life world because the conditions of daily activity might not necessarily remain the same. It is necessary to ascertain that radical changes affecting internal and external conditions of daily routines have not gone unnoticed. Actually, every individual has developed a habitualized *monitoring system* which changes with time (Wilson, 1977, pp. 36-37). The monitoring system depends on the perception of everyday events and conditions of activity, for example, state of health, weather, and sufficiency of daily food stuff. People devote their most intensive attention to things which come close to everyday affairs and which belong to the world within actual reach or the primary zone of the life world, for example, home, family, and work (Schutz, 1964, pp. 123-127; Schutz & Luckmann, 1973, pp. 36-45). Interest in events occurring beyond this primary zone varies considerably depending on how they touch personal interests and how they are reported in the media. All information is not received via systematic seeking but a significant part of daily information may emerge accidentally.

This aspect emphasizes the passive side of seeking orienting information; all that is required is to keep an eye on life environment and register information as it flows from different media. The routine, sometimes absent-minded watching of television news may be an example of this kind of exposure to information. Actually, one cannot speak here of information seeking in the literal meaning of the word because only a minor part of daily media use is triggered by a purposeful search for messages in order to clarify specific issues. However, some current themes or dramatic events may sharpen our attention to media supply, in particular if they touch our interests. For example, one may be planning a journey to some exotic country but radio news reporting the increased risk of earthquakes in that region may mean a major stop for these plans. Information received from the radio may lead to further consulting of information sources, for example, a travel agency because it may be necessary to give up the long-awaited journey. Cases like this exemplify dynamic aspects of seeking orienting information; suddenly, there is no longer a question of merely registering occasional messages but systematic hunting of information on problematic issues.

More generally, if the requirement to change the order of things grows relatively strong and a person cannot meet this need solely by means of receiving orienting information from the media, it is possible that the seeking of orienting information will change to seeking of practical information which directly serves the problem solving. In most cases the problem solving processes seem to be episodic by nature. The processes have a relatively clear starting-point and it may also be possible to tell when the problem received its solution (the empirical questions of seeking practical information will be discussed later on). As noted above, the boundary between the seeking of orienting and practical information is somewhat ambiguous. The distinction is analytic in that the seeking of practical information may also serve the purposes of ensuring the continuity of way of life or its controlled change. Likewise, one might think that systematic seeking of orienting information helps to solve specific problems because newspapers may report occasionally how others have survived similar problem situations.

Way of Life and ELIS: Mutual Ties

The above analysis of relationships between way of life and ELIS suggests that way of life not only directs practices of information seeking but that the latter may also affect the former. For example, watching television news every evening can be interpreted as a part of the order of things. The role of seeking orienting information as a constituting factor of way of life becomes clear in routines like this; we read a newspaper early in the morning before we leave for work, and so on. Indeed, all motives of mass media use cannot be reduced to purposeful information seeking alone. For example, some part of the regular reading of daily newspapers may be explained by referring to the individual's unreflected feeling of attachment and belonging in the community. Thus a newspaper can be seen as

a sign of this quality of belonging, eliciting interest to see how the community evolves (see Reimer, 1994, p. 133).

The empirical analysis of seeking orienting information is often problematic due to its habitualized nature: people may find it difficult to report something nontrivial about it because particularly mass media is often deeply embedded within everyday life practices (Reimer, 1994, p. 71). Most people seem to have their habits of reading newspapers, listening to radio, and watching television. If we think that the various media present constitute our daily "mediascape" (for the term see Appadurai, 1992, p. 17), several factors become self-evident; for example, the radio reporting daily events at short intervals.

Teachers and Workers as Seekers of Orienting Information

In the detailed review of ELIS practices there appeared to be some differences which strengthened the assumption that way of life directs information seeking in a significant way. Teachers were more eager to seek factual information from various media, and they took a more critical stand towards the supply of light entertainment from radio, television, newspapers, and magazines. This orientation cannot be explained by personal interests alone. The requirements of daily work matter here: the role of a teacher requires quite systematic monitoring of current affairs in society. The requirements of professional tasks (to keep abreast of current developments in society and culture and to accumulate cultural capital) also support their leisure time pursuits more strongly: typically they read books more than workers. The occupational tasks of industrial worker are not necessarily connected with leisure time activities in this sense, but the interest in informational pursuits is better explained on the basis of occasional interest in current affairs, not the substantial requirements of daily work per se.

The use of different media seems to be habitualized in both groups, and television watching and newspaper reading were particularly characteristic of the everyday life of the interviewees. Teachers and workers appeared to use these media in multiple ways, seeking both serious programs and entertainment. Both groups stressed the importance of regular watching of television news and teachers also especially valued documentaries. However, particularly among workers, the role of entertainment tended to be emphasized in listening to radio and watching television. Because radio and television also seemed to function as a part of the daily "landscape of voices and pictures," the deliberate seeking of information took an insignificant part of the attention devoted to these media. The comparison of sources and channels of orienting information revealed that the newspaper is not necessarily posited as inferior compared with electronic media because many interviewees ranked newspapers equally important as radio and television. They valued the fact that even though newspaper reading might be as ritualistic as watching the evening news on television, in the reading of newspapers one can concentrate more thoroughly on the most interesting topics and ignore others.

Except for two workers the interviewees seemed to live in an environment of abundant media supply. At present, the daily mediascape is more colorful but also more fragmented than previously. Some informants felt that they faced difficulties in trying to get a whole picture of daily events. Because information is poured incessantly from various channels, they easily felt fed up with information; only a small fraction of media supply will be worthy of note.

All but one of the informants subscribed to a newspaper; four teachers and workers even subscribed to two newspapers. Except for three workers, the interviewees also subscribed to various magazines; as expected, the workers were more interested in magazines associated with entertainment whereas teachers preferred "serious" magazines reporting on cultural and professional affairs. Even though most informants confessed that they did not read all sections of newspapers reporting current developments in culture and society, the majority of them felt that they monitor sufficiently daily events through the media. It seemed that the typical information environment of both groups is often perceived as self-evident, built on common uniting elements. In the course of a day people tend to read the same newspaper in the morning (in Tampere, the majority of people read the regionally dominating newspaper titled *Aamulehti*) and watch similar television news. It is noteworthy that no informants used electronic information sources via domestic networks, say international ones such as Internet; only a couple of teachers referred to them as potential information sources. In fact, this is understandable because with the exception of Minitel in France, the services of electronic networks reach but a minor part of ordinary citizens seeking everyday life information (for the role of networks in ELIS see Dutton, 1994; Rogers & Collins-Jarvis & Schmitz, 1994).

The common basis of media supply does not mean, however, that interviewees see their world in an identical way because only a part of supply is selected for closer review and interpreted individually. The social class of the interviewees matters here in that belonging to the middle class is an indication of relatively strong cultural or cognitive competence enabling the individual to evaluate the meanings of various messages available from the media. However, being a member of the middle class will not necessarily mean that every teacher would prefer "serious" media supply in every situation. This applies, on average, only to teachers. The interviews revealed that personal interest and current life situation affect media use. There appeared to be a couple of teachers not particularly interested in the culture or politics sections; similarly, some workers preferred documentaries and other serious programs and took a critical view of entertainment.

Seeking Orienting Information from Electronic and Printed Media

The empirical study revealed some differences in practices of seeking orienting information which seem to depend on the differing ways of life of the interviewees. However, the question of outlining typologies of information seeking

practices on the basis of way of life proved very difficult. Several alternatives were investigated, for example, the possibility of outlining the types of "middle-class" versus "working-class" information seekers. The alternative was rejected because the types outlined were rather imprecise, in particular if the practices of seeking orienting and practical information were grouped together. Another alternative considered was the typification of informants by their use of various media, in other words radio, television, newspapers, magazines and books. This alternative was also rejected because the picture drawn from information-seeking practices would have been quite fragmented.

The third alternative was based on the review of seeking orienting and practical information between social classes. The review of seeking orienting information was divided into two parts, seeking from electronic media (radio and television) and printed media (newspapers and books). This compromise seemed to function quite well because it made it possible to draw a clearer picture of information seeking while retaining the viewpoint of class-based ways of life as factors directing ELIS. A separate review of practices of seeking orienting information from electronic and printed media seemed reasonable because previous studies (e.g., Erämetsä, 1990, pp. 216-219) had shown that the use of these media types differs interestingly between social classes. The division between electronic and printed media implies, however, some problems regarding the role of books in ELIS. Books represent a kind of "specialized media" in relation to "broadcast media" such as television and newspaper in that books usually focus on specific issues, not current affairs in general. Books are consulted to meet individual needs which vary from pleasure reading of entertainment to professional development. Thus, we may ask whether it is reasonable to include all book reading in ELIS: should we accept only documentary books reporting of current political affairs, and so on? Because fiction as well as nonfiction may orient people in that they help them to find their everyday world more meaningful, all book reading was interpreted as a part of seeking orienting information from printed media.

Classifying the Seekers of Orienting Information

In the outlining of the typology of seeking orienting information the conception of Erämetsä (1990, pp. 160-164) was utilized. He divides the quantity of media use into *heavy*, *medium* and *light use*. The orientation to media is classified in *cognitive oriented*, *balanced*, and *affective oriented*. Cognitive orientation to media is characterized by realistic attitudes toward the life world. Information is seen as an instrument of reaching different ends; the individual accepts deferred rewards in everyday activity, and he or she is anxious to learn new things and make efforts to reach personal goals. A cognitively oriented individual prefers cultural and scientific publications, frequently reads newspapers, in particular sections of leading articles, politics, science and culture; watches television programs

reporting of current affairs and social and cultural developments; and listens to radio programs dealing with similar issues. Affective orientation is characterized by inclination to fantasy in thinking, an expressive attitude to information and search for immediate rewards. An affectively-oriented individual is an infrequent newspaper reader, primarily devoting attention to such sections as entertainment, crime, and accident. He or she is also an infrequent book reader but a heavy user of television and local (commercial) radio stations, watches primarily escapist movies and series, and listens to entertainment programs and rock music. Finally, balanced or a neutral orientation to media means that an individual seeks and uses both "serious" and entertaining elements from printed and electronic media.

Use of Electronic Media

Figure 2 reviews the practices of seeking orienting information from electronic media, that is, radio and television.

FIGURE 2
Seeking Orienting Information from Electronic Media

		ORIENTATION TO MEDIA		
		cognitive	balanced	affective
QUANTITY OF MEDIA USE	heavy		• T-10 • W-4 • W-11 • W-9	• W-1
	medium	• W-2 • T-1	• T-5 • T-3 • W-3 • T-2 • T-4 • W-6	• W-8 • W-5
	light	• T-11 • T-8 • W-10 • T-7 • T-6	• T-9	

Note: T = Teacher, W = Worker; numbers identify the persons interviewed

The interviewees have been located in Figure 2 by two criteria: the quantity of media use and type of programs which they were interested in or which they listened to or watched. Because the study was qualitative by nature, interviewees were asked to give only a general-level description of the amount of daily media use, that is, the hours devoted to the media. Quantities of radio and television uses were calculated and the position given in Figure 2 was determined on the basis of

were calculated and the position given in Figure 2 was determined on the basis of the mean use of these media. One of the interviewees (W-7) who failed to give any reliable evaluation of her media use was omitted from the figure. The criteria of quantity of use were defined on the basis of national media surveys indicating the average hours devoted to radio and television among social classes in Finland (Erämetsä, 1990, p. 193; Joukkoviestintätilasto, 1993, pp. 144, 162). The use of radio was classified as heavy if it exceeded 3 hours a day, medium if radio was listened to 1 to 3 hours a day, and light if it remained on less than 1 hour a day. The quantities in television watching were over 2 hours, 1-2 hours, and less than 1 hour a day. Applying these criteria, 1 teacher and 4 workers were heavy users, 5 teachers and 5 workers medium users, and 5 teachers and 1 worker light users of electronic media.

Far more interesting than the mere quantities of use was the orientation to electronic media. The interviewees were placed on the horizontal axis of Figure 2 by evaluating the types of programs they preferred (space does not permit a detailed analysis of the preferences given by informants). As specified previously, the preference for news, documentary, and related "serious" programs is an indication of cognitive orientation, the preference for entertainment (including sports) as affective orientation. The picture concerning the orientation was further clarified by questions focusing on the values and attitudes attached to information seeking. It should be noted, however, that Figure 2 gives only an overall picture of the orientation of informants. Because no objective criteria were available to indicate, for example, that the orientation of an individual teacher consists of "55% cognitive and 45% affective" elements in the case of television viewing, the place of each interviewees in the figure had to be defined by means of the overall picture of every interviewee, related to corresponding overall pictures of others concerning use of electronic media. This subjective conception was utilized in the "fine tuning" of the figure, that is, in the comparison of media behavior of informants.

Figure 2 shows that approximately every second informant could be classified as a medium user of electronic media; heavy users were found among workers and light users among teachers. This is not very surprising, as previous studies (Erämetsä, 1990, pp. 216-219) offer evidence to support this conclusion. The picture concerning media orientation also corresponds fairly closely to earlier findings (Erämetsä, 1990). The majority of interviewees represented balanced orientation to electronic media. However, teachers were more cognitively oriented whereas all interviewees with affective orientation were found among workers. W-2 made an exception from this rule; he selected deliberately the programs to be watched or listened to. In general, the quantity of media use of cognitive oriented interviewees was quite low, because they applied rather strict criteria in the selection of programs. In contrast, affective orientation of electronic media implies heavy use with loose selection criteria. For example, W-1 listens to radio all day at work and watches entertainment, especially sport on television, often several

The majority of interviewees could be located in the class of balanced media use, thus indicating that social class will not solely determine the type of media orientation. Although all teachers were not cognitively oriented and all workers not affectively oriented, way of life based on social class seems to play its own role in the direction of media use. This conclusion is supported by the fact that the majority of teachers classified among balanced users came somewhat closer to cognitive than affective orientation. As a whole, Figure 2 is in accord with the notions concerning way of life as a factor directing information-seeking behavior. Due to more pressing requirements to accumulate cultural capital teachers tend to prefer more markedly "serious" programs, devoting less time to entertainment and to electronic media in general. Even though watching television also belongs to teachers' leisure time, it never dominates it so that there would be no time for book reading and other literary pursuits. In contrast, watching television, chiefly entertainment, all evening long with minor interruptions is not very unusual among workers. The relatively heavy use of electronic media can also be explained by the fact that many workers listen to radio at work. The interviews revealed that most programs listened to daily were transmitted from local radio stations whose program profile is biased towards entertainment and popular music; for their part these program choices support the conclusion that affective elements tend to be emphasized in industrial worker's media orientation.

Use of Printed Media

Figure 3 reviews the seeking of orienting information from printed media.

FIGURE 3
Seeking Orienting Information from Printed Media

		ORIENTATION TO MEDIA		
		cognitive	balanced	affective
QUANTITY OF MEDIA USE	heavy	• T-8 • T-11 • T-1 • W-2	• T-5 • T-9 • W-4	
	medium	• T-7 • T-6	• T-10 • T-2 • T-4 • T-3 • W-9 • W-11 • W-3 • W-7	• W-6
	light	• W-10		• W-1 • W-5 • W-8

Note: T = Teacher, W = Worker; numbers identify the persons interviewed

First, the quantities of book and newspaper reading were calculated and second, the orientation of media use was evaluated using the same classes as in

First, the quantities of book and newspaper reading were calculated and second, the orientation of media use was evaluated using the same classes as in Figure 2. Findings of national media surveys (e.g., Erämetsä, 1990, p. 193) were used in the definition of criteria of quantities of media use. Newspaper reading was classified as heavy if it took more than 1.5 hours a day, medium, if the time varied between 0.5 to 1.5 hours, and light if it was less than half an hour a day. Criteria for book reading were developed by referring to findings of a national survey (Eskola, 1993, pp. 27-30). The participant was classified as an active (or heavy) reader if the number of books (fiction and nonfiction) exceeded one a month, a medium reader if the informant had read at least one book within six months, and a light reader if the number of books read was less than one within this period of time. It should be noted that magazine reading was not taken into consideration due to vague estimations given by informants concerning reading time. This might not be particularly problematic because the comments given by informants revealed that magazines play a rather insignificant role in ELIS compared with newspapers. Only some informants mentioned that magazines may sometimes report interesting background knowledge of current affairs or provide useful hints to clarify health problems.

The analysis showed that one worker and two teachers were heavy newspaper readers. Three workers and seven teachers appeared to be medium readers; seven workers and two teachers spent less than half an hour a day on newspaper reading. Similarly, one worker and eight teachers were counted among active book readers. Eight workers and three teachers were medium readers; the group of light readers consisted of two workers. Estimates of book reading were rather summary, partly due to the fact that fiction was also included in them. However, the reading of professional literature was not included in the study because it would have favored teachers. Loose criteria do not endanger the validity of results because the significance of books proved to be low in the daily seeking of orienting information. Figure 3 takes this fact into account in that the place of informants was chiefly determined by hours spent on newspaper reading. Only in cases where the number of books being read was unusually high (T-5, T-6, T-7, T-11 and W-4) or low (W-1), was book reading taken into consideration. The degree of cognitive or affective orientation was evaluated by considering the sections of newspapers which the participants found most interesting or uninteresting. Orientation to book reading was investigated by focusing on the distribution between fiction versus nonfiction so that much reading of nonfiction, for example, culture and politics was seen as an indication of cognitive orientation, and reading of primarily light entertainment as affective orientation.

As in seeking orienting information from electronic media, the majority of interviewees could be classified into neutral positions regarding printed media. Five workers and six teachers were medium users of printed media. Of the heavy users, two were workers and five teachers whereas the group of light users consisted of four workers. In fact, it is no surprise that teachers are more diligent

users of printed media than workers (e.g., Erämetsä, 1990, p. 219). The findings concerning media orientation also support conclusions drawn from previous studies (Erämetsä, 1990, pp. 216-218). About half of the interviewees were balanced users. As with electronic media, teachers outnumbered workers in the group of cognitively-oriented informants, whereas all affectively-oriented informants appeared to be workers. In comparison with electronic media, the order between the quantity of use and media orientation became reversed in that cognitively-oriented interviewees were heavy users of printed media whereas the media use of affectively-oriented interviewees remained rather low. The use of printed media seems to express some kind of accumulation of use because diligent newspaper readers are also active book readers (e.g., T-8), whereas light and affectively oriented newspaper reading is rarely connected with book reading (e.g., W-8).

Seeking of Orienting Information: Conclusions

The comparison of Figures 2 and 3 indicates that the information-seeking behavior of informants was quite consistent, irrespective of media type considered. All of those orienting cognitively to electronic media orient similarly to printed media. In the case of affective orientation only one exception was found, namely W-6 who takes an affective orientation to printed media but a balanced view of electronic media. Thus, informants classified into the neutral position were the same, except for the person mentioned above. The distribution of use of printed media supports the conclusion drawn in the review of Figure 2. Although the quantity and orientation of printed media use are not wholly determined by the social class of informants, the social class based way of life does matter here. More clearly than in the case of electronic media, the requirements for accumulating cultural capital result in that the ways by which teachers seek orienting information from printed media is emphasized more cognitively than the corresponding practice of workers.

SEEKING PRACTICAL INFORMATION IN EVERYDAY LIFE

In the case of seeking practical information the link to way of life is less evident, because this kind of ELIS is contextualized in specific problem-solving situations. Usually, the problems may be seen as "unwanted guests" threatening the meaningful order of things. Therefore, it seems more reasonable to review the nature of practical information seeking in relation to mastery of life.

Although the information needs of the interviewees were not surveyed systematically due to the critical incident method applied in this study, its findings resemble those obtained in earlier studies (e.g., Chen & Hernon, 1982). The

information needs (or the everyday life problem situations giving rise to information needs) proved to be quite heterogeneous, even though some areas, for instance, health and employment, were more frequently mentioned than others. Informants utilized various information sources and channels in their problem solving. The selection and use of them was determined by such factors as availability and accessibility of the source or the channel, as well by the ease of use. Individual qualities also had their own importance, for example, the degree of motivation and personal courage to seek for assistance.

Teachers were also more active in the seeking of practical information. The differences became visible most clearly in the review of the information sources used in problem solving. Both workers and teachers preferred informal sources, primarily personal communication, whereas the utilization of formal channels remained surprisingly low. The teachers differed from workers most distinctively regarding the utilization of contact networks. Among their friends there were, for example, lawyers and physicians who could be contacted in problematic cases. It also seemed as if teachers had more determination to contact experts or decision makers who were not easily available.

ELIS and the Types of Mastery of Life

The features of seeking information associated with the four ideal types of mastery of life, optimistic-cognitive, pessimistic-cognitive, defensive-affective and pessimistic-affective were described above. The central assumption is that the relatively established style of mastery of life affects the ways by which people approach everyday life problems and seek practical information to facilitate their solving. No attempts were made to investigate "directly" the validity of the aforementioned typology because it would have required the use of psychological tests. Instead, an indirect research strategy was chosen to gain an understanding of the hypothesized types through the analysis of problem-solving behavior and information seeking practices attached to it. Thus, it was assumed that the ways in which people solve their problems also reveal their dominant styles of mastery of life.

The indirect strategy is problematic in that the concept of mastery of life seems to become unnecessary; it all seems to boil down to the concept of "problem solving style." This argument is acceptable because loosely speaking the concept of problem solving style comes close to that of mastery of life. In any case, the concept of mastery of life was not abandoned. As a logical counterpart of the concept of way of life, mastery of life gives more proper description of the basic nature of caring activity intended by the conception of "keeping things in order." Mastery of life not only refers to means of this "keeping" but also to its valuations and to goals attached one's life project at a more general level; thus, mastery of life is not merely reduced to utilizing the most efficient instruments in specific problem-solving situations. Furthermore, it is obvious that a considerable part of mastery of life goes on without any deeper reflection; all mastery of life cannot be

reduced to acts of systematic problem solving alone. Thus one may argue that "problem-solving style" is a subcategory of mastery of life, describing a set of ways and means used in everyday life problem solving.

Critical Incidents

In the interviews participants were asked to select a nonwork problem situation they had encountered recently which had required special attention to be solved. The informants described, in detail, the context and origin of their problem, as well as the phases of the problem-solving process, including activities associated with seeking of practical information; the development of their approach to the problem, both at cognitive and affective level, was also described. One of the problems was that the descriptions of critical incidents, thus obtained scattered on a wide area. Difficulties were also met in that one teacher and five workers failed to report any acceptable "story" describing a chosen problem solving process. However, two informants (W-3 and W-4) agreed to comment on a fictional critical incident concerning the process of losing one's job. The 16 reports given in interviews concerned unemployment or the threat of it (7 cases), economic worries (3 cases), health problems (3 cases), divorce (2 cases), and removal abroad (1 case). Similar to earlier studies these problem areas seem to be quite heterogenous; however, certain topics such as economic and health problems seem to be more frequently mentioned than others (e.g., Chen & Hernon, 1982, p. 48; Warner, Murray, & Palmour, 1973, p. 96).

In order to obtain a clearer picture of the relationship between mastery of life and seeking of practical information it would have been better if the critical incidents were focused on few topics, such as health or unemployment. Because the degree of acuteness and difficulty of problems varied from case to case, it was not easy to answer questions such as to what extent practices of seeking practical information were determined by the relatively stable problem-solving abilities of the informants and what was the role of specific characteristics of the problem encountered. Thus, one may speculate that if one happened to choose a relatively "easy" critical incident with a happy end, one might have come to think that the informant acted rationally in problem solving, whereas reporting of a more complicated incident resulting in a nonoptimal solution might imply that the informant had behaved somewhat unsystematically, failing to benefit from the most useful information sources.

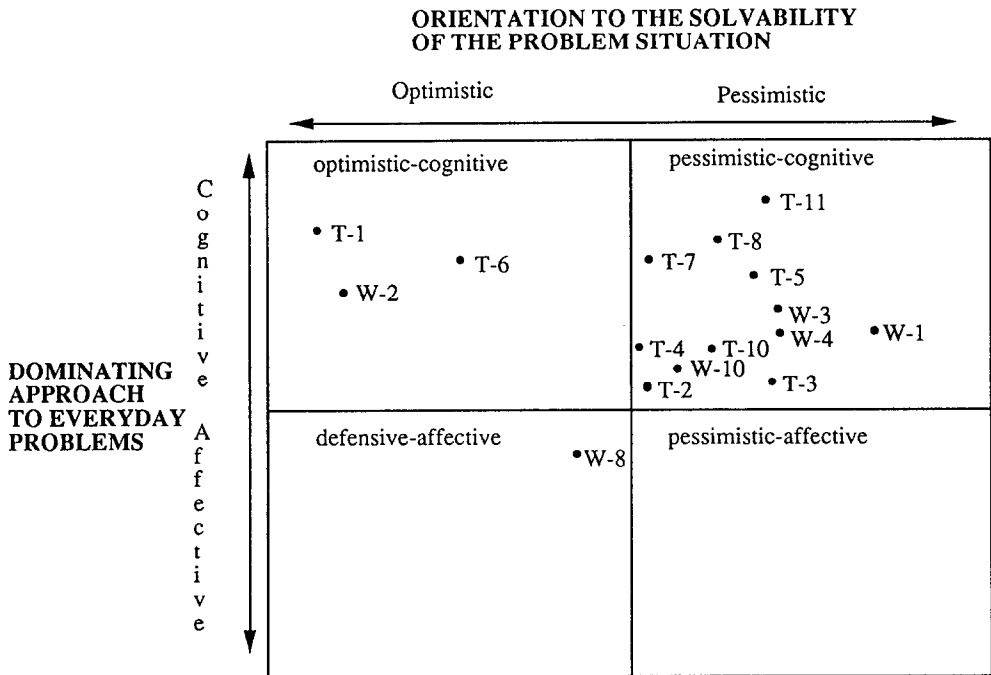
Method

With these reservations in mind, an attempt was made to describe relationships between mastery of life and seeking of practical information serving problem solving. Similar to the typifications presented in Figures 2 and 3, both objective and subjective elements were used in the analysis. The former elements were based on the facts obtained from the reports of critical incidents; for example, the

facts refer to the subject area of the critical incident and the number of information sources and channels consulted. Taken as a whole, subjective elements were more important in the evaluations made by the investigator in regard to the two dimensions. One of them described the optimistic versus pessimistic orientation to the solvability of the problem situation and the other the dominating approach to everyday problems in terms of cognitive versus affective orientation. Based on the reports given by informants, the researcher assessed the nature of both orientations in problem solving and in information seeking attached to it. If the critical incidents had a common topic, for example, economic worries or health problems, the orientations of informants were compared to relate them in the two dimensions in question. For example, the degree of optimistic versus pessimistic and cognitive versus affective orientations of T-5, T-6, T-7, T-8, W-3, W-4 and W-8 who reported critical incidents concerning unemployment or threat of it were compared. The only case with an incomparable topic, that is, removal abroad (T-5) was assessed only by its internal criteria. It should be emphasized that evaluations were not quantified in per cents or other objective measures because the empirical data was gathered qualitatively. As a result of these somewhat impressionistic analyses, an overall picture of the types of mastery of life was drawn; the spots in Figure 4 indicate the summary positions given to each informants by these criteria.

It should be noted that an exact placing of informants in Figure 4 would have required more than a single spot per informant. This way it would be possible to illustrate the nature of problem solving as a process, somewhat oscillating around the central point as marked in Figure 4. The degree of optimism versus pessimism as well as cognitive versus affective orientation may vary somehow during the problem-solving process. However, this variation was not very significant and only those informants (e.g., T-4 and T-7) located close to the boundary between optimistic-cognitive and pessimistic-cognitive did move across the boundary. However, drawing a path of spots describing the problem-solving phases of each case was given up because the clarity of Figure 4 would have suffered. Thus, the spots describe only the central point of the paths, not the problem solving processes in full length. Because the nature of mastery of life of informants was analyzed on the basis of their problem solving behavior in the context of a single critical incident, Figure 4 gives only an overall picture of the relationship between mastery of life and the seeking of practical information. Thus, Figure 4 neither measures the superiority of individual problem solving abilities nor reveals stable styles of mastery of life consistent across situations; the figure only describes in an exploratory way how the social class of informants was connected with the nature of mastery of life.

FIGURE 4
Types of Mastery of Life and Seeking of Practical Information



Main Findings

In the light of the preceding analysis of seeking orienting information it should come as no surprise that, in Figure 4 the majority of informants (eight teachers and four workers) were also located in the rather neutral position of pessimistic-cognitive mastery of life. It was slightly surprising that informants were not dispersed more evenly into varying classes and none was classified in the group of pessimistic-affective mastery of life. For example, on the basis of conclusions drawn by Chatman (1991) of information seeking of lower-class people it would have been expected that more workers would have been located in the class of defensive-affective, perhaps even pessimistic-affective mastery of life. Perhaps the candidates of this group chose not to participate in this study. In order to reach

those people one should try a differing sample, for example, covering inactive individuals who live alienated and marginalized from society due to drug misuse.

In the majority of cases it was not possible to find a correlation between social class and type of mastery of life. As in seeking of orienting information teachers emphasized the importance of cognitive elements in problem solving. This conclusion is supported by the fact that the only informant representing defensive-affective mastery of life was found among the workers. In addition, half of the teachers representing pessimistic-cognitive mastery of life emphasized cognitive orientation in problem solving. Interestingly, the assumptions concerning the relationship between mastery of life and information-seeking practices were confirmed. Informants W-2, T-1, and T-6 who represented the optimistic-cognitive mastery of life approached their problems quite systematically, trying to find a reasonable solution during a certain period of time. They relied on their cognitive abilities and used primarily informal contacts to clarify the problematic issues at hand. The purposefulness characteristic of these informants was manifest also in that they seemed to have a fairly clear view of information sources deemed to be most relevant or totally irrelevant. They also valued highly the importance of taking the initiative in information seeking and stressed the importance of personal courage in contacting experts, irrespective of their high administrative positions. Thinking of the criteria of successful problem solving in the information society, qualities such as high rate of cognitive competence, systematic thinking, energetic seeking of information and optimistic stance to solvability of problems seem to be more and more valuable. On the other hand it might not be self-evident whether these qualities of an "informational superman" should be taken as an ideal to be aimed at by every citizen in today's society!

The only informant (W-8) with defensive-affective orientation took a rather sceptical and emotionally laden stand to her problem, that is, losing her job. In this case social class based factors such as low level of education also seemed to exclude some means of problem solving. Her practices of information seeking moreover proved to be rather passive because she had consulted only a few information sources, being those most easily available. It seemed as if problem solving did not exceed waiting for a day when things would take a better turn. Because only one person could be grouped into this class, the relationships between mastery of life and seeking of practical information could be illustrated only tentatively in regard to this specific class of the typology.

Characteristic of those classified in the group of pessimistic-cognitive mastery of life was a reserved optimism towards the solvability of problems and preparedness for the possibility that optimal solutions could not be reached at all. In fact, the considerable number of informants grouped in this class can be explained by the nature of problems chosen to be reported because in most cases there appeared to be no reason to foster unwarranted optimism. Therefore, the place of interviewees on the dimension of optimistic versus pessimistic seemed to be determined more strongly by the nature of the problem encountered, for example, the degree of perceived difficulty of the problem than by the personality

traits of the informants. Indeed, no one is either an unreserved optimist or a gloomy pessimist per se but rather an optimist or a pessimist in relation of the perceived sufficiency of the problem-solving competence in different phases of the problem solving process. Contrary to that, the dimension of cognitive versus affective seemed to predict more systematically the nature of informational behavior of interviewees.

The aforementioned features manifested themselves in that informants T-5, T-7, T-8, and T-11 were located in the class of pessimistic-cognitive mastery of life. They took an analytic stance towards their problems and actively sought information in order to facilitate problem solving. Thus, they came close to interviewees characterized as optimistic-cognitive. This question was not addressed more closely in the case of the more affectively oriented informants T-2 and T-3, because their problems were quite personal and required not so much dispassionate reasoning as emotional disengagement. Had they selected a less affectively sensitive issue it might have been possible that they would have been located closer to the cognitive orientation. Because the problems reported by pessimistic-cognitive informants were drawn from four different themes, and because the degree of difficulty of problems varied, there was no use to proceed any longer in the analysis due to lack of "commensurable" factors.

COMPARISON OF ELIS TYPES

The picture describing relationships between mastery of life and information seeking can be clarified by comparing the typologies of seeking orienting and practical information. Figures 2, 3 and 4 show that all informants (T-1, T-6, and W-2) representing optimistic-cognitive mastery of life oriented cognitively to both electronic and printed media. Thus, the ways of solving everyday problems and seeking orienting information seem to have inherent features which indicate a rather consistent logic of informational behavior. Informants using selectively electronic media and also orienting cognitively to printed media seem to prefer an analytic view everyday life problems; they also rely quite heavily on their problem-solving abilities. Because the problems encountered by informants were of such nature that the most important practical information could be traced from their own memory or asked from experts, no analysis was made to survey whether informants were also inclined to use printed sources in the seeking of practical information.

Other types of mastery of life did not show such logical connections between seeking of orienting and practical information. However, the orientation of W-8 representing defensive-affective mastery of life was affectively inclined to both types of media. One of the problems revealed in this study was that those oriented most affectively to media were most likely to fail to report a critical incident; in fact, W-5 and W-6 refused to give any. As expected, the majority of informants belonging to the group of pessimistic-cognitive mastery of life was found among those orienting neutrally to electronic and printed media. However, a couple of

exceptions were found because one worker (W-10) and three teachers (T-7, T-8, and T-11) were located in the class of cognitive orientation (concerning both media), whereas one worker (W-1) represented affective orientation in relation to both media types. The exceptions might be best explained by the nature of critical incidents. The economic and health problems encountered by informants orienting cognitively to media (W-10, T-7, T-8, and T-11) were of such a type that the rapid solution of problems was improbable. The critical incident of W-1 orienting affectively to media was also characterized by complicated issues, that is, Finnish taxation level was felt to be unbearably high; in this case a rather pessimistic stance towards the quick solvability of the problems was natural.

In general, workers seemed to be more dependent on information sources which were rather easily available. The factor of "immediate availability" also directed their ways to seek orienting information quite significantly. This practice is, of course, problematic because the information sources and channels most easily available and accessible might not necessarily be most expedient in problem solving. The best sources, for example, articles focusing on the problem at hand may be "hiding" somewhere in libraries. Their seeking and use require additional efforts, possibly a sufficient command of foreign language which workers do not necessarily have. Thinking of the equality of people as information seekers and users in the information society, this sounds somewhat alarming. We may speculate whether it is ever possible, at least in principle, to develop a society without differences of informational competence, based on social and cultural differences implying educational and economic hierarchies. Is it ever possible to construct educational systems and information networks in such a way that all social classes may utilize them on equal terms as opportunity structures? The conclusions of Bourdieu (1984) seem to indicate that this goal may remain Utopia because the development of Western society is essentially built on incessant competition for material, social, and cultural capital between individuals and social groups.

CONCLUDING ASSESSMENTS

The foregoing attempts to typologize ELIS showed that way of life and mastery of life based on social class affect indisputably practices of information seeking. These connections could be seen more clearly in the seeking of orienting than of practical information. Attempts to typologize ELIS also revealed that way of life and mastery of life will not alone determine information-seeking behavior. Informants belonging to the same social class with equal level of education, similar conditions of work, and hobbies resembling each other may differ quite remarkably in the seeking of orienting information (e.g., W-2 vs. W-3). On the other hand, information seeking does not always follow the boundaries of social classes; exceptions are possible. For example, W-10 is oriented more cognitively to electronic media than expected "merely" on the basis of her social class.

In general, this study supports the findings of earlier studies in that those informants with a relatively high level of education seek information more actively from various channels, for example, the public library. This conclusion can be generalized to seeking of orienting information at large. Conceptions of way of life and mastery of life based on social class are relevant in the analysis of seeking orienting and practical information. The empirical study also showed that ways of life characteristic of industrial workers and of the middle class are by no means monolithic and, thus, differ sharply from each other. However, there can be some individual variation within the classes. Defined in terms of education and occupation, social class describes only the outline of way of life and mastery of life. Way of life as order of things which is characteristic of certain social class gives only an overall picture of ELIS in that it tells us how members of that social class tend to prefer various sources and channels due to their educational level and requirements of accumulating cultural capital.

Questions of Refining the Research Framework

Concepts such as way of life and mastery of life are wide by extension and heterogenous by intension. On the one hand, this is an advantage because it makes it possible to analyze ELIS as a natural component of everyday practice. The framework also takes into account the character of a person's informational orientation, as well as the social and cultural capital on which this orientation is built. On the other hand, the concepts with large extensions and heterogenous intensions are problematic in that their exact operationalization is difficult; thus it may not be easy to specify which parts of ELIS are really determined by way of life and which would be explained better by other factors, such as current situation of life or the degree of difficulty of the problem being encountered.

The prediction of ELIS behavior could be set on firmer ground, if the research framework would be refined by analyzing more exactly the dominant styles of mastery of life. Research should be focused more sharply on questions how people emphasize cognitive and affective elements when they approach everyday problems. In addition, more detailed descriptions of situation bound factors are needed to clarify the nature of problems triggering ELIS behavior. Because way of life is constituted by a number of factors, such as preferences of leisure time uses, the decontextualized utilization of the concept of way of life easily leads to trivial or circular conclusions. For example, one may argue that Mrs. A is a frequent user of the public library because active borrowing of books is part of her middle class way of life. In turn, characteristics of Mrs. A's way of life may be explained by noting that it is middle class by nature because literary pursuits implying frequent library use belong essentially to it. Another critical question concerning the refinement of the framework can be deduced from the former: is it possible to analyze information seeking behavior by using concepts which are more fruitful than way of life and mastery of life, for example degree of

interestedness in various affairs and characteristics of situation or context where information seeking takes place?

This fundamental question of information seeking research may never find indisputable answers. Anyway, it seems that the employment of factors describing way of life, mastery of life and situational elements enable us to obtain a fuller picture of ELIS and avoid circular conclusions simply suggesting that way of life determines information seeking and vice versa. Similarly, it is possible to avoid simplifying conclusions that style of mastery of life alone, conceived as a psychological construct independent of social and cultural factors, dictates the practice of ELIS. It is equally obvious that situation bound factors will be useful only if they are connected to those describing way of life and mastery of life. Taken independently and without a proper consideration of the characteristics of cultural or cognitive "equipment" of the information seeker being manifest in his or her way of life, situational factors offer a rather abstract picture of ELIS processes. For example, in the review of seeking practical information it is not just all the same whether the cognitive competence of informants differs in some respects or whether the problem eliciting information needs varies in certain respects. We may think that, for example, middle class people have, due to their relatively high level of cultural capital, better chances than workers of succeeding in seeking practical information in problem situations where it is necessary to contact several decision makers working at various levels in state bureaucracy. Individuals make choices in various situations but they always choose within the limits of their competence, which is built on social and cultural factors.

In the refinement of the research framework one should devote closer attention not only to contextual or situational factors facilitating or impeding information seeking but also to availability and accessibility of information. Particularly, in the review of practical information seeking and use, the nature of the problem eliciting information needs should also be specified. This issue was referred to above when a conclusion was drawn that orientation to solvability of problem also explained by the perceived difficulty of the problem at hand. Similarly, one may argue that issues dealing with situational factors and access to information remain quite secondary if they are not reviewed in their relation to way of life and mastery of life. Questions of what is meant by "directing" of information seeking will be crystallized into problems concerning the nature of basic orientation determined by social class factors and individual dispositions, or analogous to the conception of Bourdieu's "informational habitus."

Conclusion

Savolainen (1995) showed that the framework depicted in Figure 1 was quite useful in the analysis of ELIS, even though several questions for further analysis were detected. In particular, further specification of the concept of mastery of life is needed, as well as its connections to the seeking of practical information. In general, the further empirical validation of the framework requires a more focused

attempt to study informants selected from various social classes reporting critical incidents concentrating on nontrivial issues such as unemployment or health problems.

Perhaps the most difficult questions of this type of research concern the stable and variable (orderly and disorderly) elements of mastery of life and informational orientation in various problem situations. Because most reconstructions given by informants in unique interviews tend to remain quite unspecified due to difficulties in the recollection of various phases of problem solving, longitudinal studies with interviews, diaries, and protocol analyses were preferable to gain a more detailed picture of the details of the problem-solving process, including acts of information seeking. Focused case studies might also make possible more profound analyses of information sources and channels available in critical situations, as well as of the degree of their utilization as opportunity structures and criteria employed in the selection of sources and channels. Information seeking studies conducted thus far have devoted insufficient attention to these questions. The next step we need to take in ELIS studies is perhaps towards more holistic research frameworks so that information seeking and use of acquired information will be reviewed in closer connection with the information sources available, not however, ignoring the situational or contextual factors affecting information seeking and use.

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