



Conférence RIFT, en partenariat avec IC-You

**Divergent Strategies for Managing Uncertainty in Finance:
How Work Practices Create Developmental Trajectories for Investment
Bankers**

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Abstract

This presentation describes how two successful Wall Street investment banks managed the uncertainty of their high-velocity environments through different work practices. One bank chose the familiar route of decreasing bankers' uncertainty. The other bank used the novel and effective practice of increasing bankers' uncertainty to make them more alert to new situations and more likely to draw on the bank's entire range of resources. Through vivid accounts of newcomers during their first two years, the presentation traces how the two banks' initially similar participants were transformed into fundamentally different kinds of persons by the different kinds of work practices they participated in. The analysis shows how competing accounts of individual development — for example, cognitive and sociocultural theories — can both be true, depending on institutional contexts and work practices.

About the speaker

Prof. Wortham's research applies techniques from linguistic anthropology to uncover social positioning in apparently neutral talk. He studies the linguistic details of how interactional and social processes can go on under the surface of classroom discussions about subject matter. He is particularly interested in interrelations between the official curriculum and covert interactional patterns in classroom discourse and in how the processes of academic learning and social identity development interconnect and facilitate each other. He has also studied interactional positioning that speakers accomplish in media discourse and in autobiographical narrative. Over the last several years he has been studying how Mexican immigrant students are faring, in school and out of school, as they move to towns without a history of Latino presence. Prof. Wortham's work has involved action research and service learning, ethnography in urban and rural high schools and their surrounding communities, and discourse analysis.