

**From the Chair**  
*Ann Swidler, UC-Berkeley*

***Big "C" or Small "c" Culture?***

When I teach the sociology of culture, I am torn between what I call "big C" and "small c" culture. By big-C-Culture I mean art, literature, music, film, as well as TV, sports, and other kinds of entertainment. By small-c-culture I mean the anthropological conception of culture, in Geertz's famous definition, "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols . . . by means of which men [and women] communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life" (*Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 89). These two foci of the sociology of culture are both central to the culture section. But the link between these two areas is more than a marriage of professional convenience. Thinking about how Culture is related to culture also raises important theoretical and empirical issues.

When I teach or give oral exams, I find the sociological literature on Culture (big C) much easier to deal with. The problems are more clearly focussed; research agendas are cumulative; and the scope of empirical investigation seems delimitable. One can study the effects of cultural production and distribution systems on the content and form of cultural products or on their innovativeness and diversity; one can investigate how audiences interpret the meanings of cultural products, how different groups draw differing meanings from the same cultural encounters, or how the practices associated

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**The Arts and Politics**  
**A Symposium**

***Editor's Introduction***

The following symposium is the first component of a newsletter series on "The Arts and Politics." The contributors were responding to the following charge: *The title is to be taken broadly. Popular art forms are included along with elite ones. Politics means not only government policies and programs, but also social movements and the formation of social values. The connections between arts and politics can operate in both directions (e.g., government activity affecting arts, or arts affecting or expressing political values) and take varied forms. This is an opportunity for you to say what you think the key issues, topics, and lines of research—recent, current, or potential—are within this general topic as it is or could be addressed by sociologists, or to highlight a particular line of research that seems especially important.* The contributors were given very limited space (contact them if you want citations or supporting details).

Below you will see responses from Paul DiMaggio, Judith Blau, Richard Peterson, Judith Balfe, Gladys Engel Lang and Kurt Lang, and Victoria Alexander. (The responses appear in the order in which they were received.) Mostly they are independent of one another, although Alexander and the Langs have engaged in a brief exchange.

Articles on more specific topics concerning the arts and politics will appear over the next few issues. Your proposals

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**Culture Syllabi and the Sociology of Culture: What Do Syllabi Tell Us?<sup>1</sup>**

*Diana Crane, University of Pennsylvania*

The publication of the second volume of syllabi for the Sociology of Culture provides an excellent opportunity to assess the status and development of the field.<sup>2</sup> How has the field changed since the publication of the first volume in 1989? Is there a set of 'core' texts, that, in effect, constitutes a 'canon' taught by section members, and has this changed since 1989?<sup>3</sup>

First, it is interesting to note the tone and organization of the first volume of course syllabi. The first volume began with a series of statements from eight scholars in the field, each making a 'case' for the importance of the sociology of culture. Even in those brief statements, there was considerable disagreement about how culture as a field should be defined and how it should be studied.

In 1995, the editors preparing this volume did not perceive that the Sociology of Culture as a subject for teaching and research needed to be defended.<sup>4</sup> Not only has the membership of the section soared (it is now over 800), but it regularly produces a spate of articles and books. Since 1989, a number of books have been published that review the field or reprint significant works. We also have a series of volumes, sponsored by the Culture Section, which serves a similar purpose.<sup>5</sup> The field has come of age in the United States. Consequently, the editors of this volume did not find it necessary to begin the new edition of teaching syllabi with statements about the field. The literature speaks for itself.

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***Elsewhere in this issue . . .***

Back cover: **Culture Online Debuts; Section Prizes, Elections, and News; & Network Activities**  
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with different kinds of cultural consumption do or don't alter the meanings of cultural objects themselves. One can study how cultural knowledge and consumption practices are related to the system of class stratification, or to other forms of social differentiation. And even if one wants to study Culture for its meanings, rather than as a product or consumption item, the ability to focus on a specifiable body of texts allows remarkably rich analyses of meanings—from Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel*, to Baxandall's *Fifteenth-Century Italian Painting*, to Will Wright's study of the cowboy movie in *Six Guns and Society*, to Griswold's study of Renaissance Revivals in the English theater.

It is much more difficult to teach, or even to think comprehensively about, the sociology of culture (small c). The mutual constitution of culture and structure (Giddens, Sewell) and the cultural dimension of institutions and organizations (Meyer, Selznick) suggest that the sociology of culture embraces all of sociology. And surely all of cultural anthropology is relevant for teaching and thinking about culture (and why not most of history, economics, and political science as well?). We have begun to see really exciting work in this area, from Paul Willis's *Learning to Labour*, to Frank Dobbin's *Forging Industrial Policy*, to William Gamson's *Talking Politics*, to Gideon Kunda's *Engineering Culture*. But this work is much less likely to seem cumulative; the core questions and debates are less clear; and it is harder to know how to organize the field.

Culture and culture sometimes compete for attention within the Culture Section. But I am convinced that these two arenas are deeply linked substantively and theoretically, and that each will flourish in contact with the other. Wuthnow's *Communities of Discourse* has pioneered one direction of this contact. He has used the conceptual and substantive advances of the production-of-culture perspective, developed mainly to study the arts and popular culture, to understand the flowering, filtering, and institutionalization of broad religious and ideological movements. But the study of art and entertainment—those symbolic worlds set apart from ordinary life, with their game-like formal properties—also benefits from the study of broad cultural meaning systems. Lucien Goldmann (in “The Sociology of Literature: Status and Problems of Method” in M. Albrecht, Barnett, and Griff, *The Sociology of Literature*, 1971) argued that cultural products achieve their formal unity by drawing on collectively-produced meaning structures, so that understanding Culture requires access to the larger culture.

This relation between Culture as art and entertainment and culture as meaning system is not quite the relationship of “reflection” that Geertz or some of the older school of cultural interpreters imply. Big-C-Culture really is an arena set apart, in which form is employed to delight, entertain, move, or excite. While some Culture-creators have a “message” about society or humanity, one important link between cultural meaning systems and Cultural objects is that the resources Culture-creators use to move or excite their audiences include socially-structured expectations, skills, and meaning structures. As Goldmann and Baxandall have argued, from very differ-

ent starting points and using very different examples, the “vocabulary” available for the achievement of aesthetic ends is derived from the perceptual, cognitive, and emotional experiences of ordinary life.

We need much more systematic, thoughtful analysis of the relation between Culture and culture. I would hazard the guess, however, that if we honor the “not real” element that makes Culture entertainment rather than real life, we will see that it “opportunistically” exploits cultural structures wherever Culture-creators can find them. Thus cultural meaning systems may, at least in places, be unified by the kinds of coherent logics that make mutually coordinated action or shared societal projects possible. But the Culture a culture generates may take these structures of meaning out of context; it may exaggerate, heighten, or deform cultural meanings; it may extract structured visual, moral, or auditory expectations only to disrupt them for effect. Because it exaggerates, gives formal structure, intensifies, sometimes deepens the material it uses, Culture can indeed provide deep insights into fundamental contradictions, structures, or patterns that form parts of a cultural meaning system. But there is no reason to expect that the Cultural products themselves will add up to a “system,” or even that they will directly “express” fundamental elements of the culture on which they draw. Rather they will exploit particular elements of that system to achieve effects that serve to move or entertain. □

## Symposium on Arts & Politics (continued from page 1)

and submissions are welcome; perhaps the ideas below (and in the column from the chair, which also relates to this subject) will spark new thinking and research.

### Politics and the Arts: A Research Agenda Paul DiMaggio, Princeton University

1. Policy Research. Much recent cultural policy making has been driven by a combination of intuition and resentment (e.g., “arts policy”) or by strategic calculation and venality (e.g., “communications policy”). Policies are premised on undemonstrated assumptions about their effects. Sociologists, who are well equipped to study these things, have been largely absent from the debates. Three areas where we could make a difference:

a. Urban arts systems. Cultural philanthropists increasingly appreciate the interconnectedness of the arts with one another and with local community structures—a fundamentally sociological perspective. Yet we know little about how such systems work—e.g., what kinds of interdependence exist among small chamber groups, large orchestras, jazz ensembles, music educators, presenters, rock bands and church choruses, and how changes at one level influence others.

b. Nonprofit/commercial interactions. Understanding systemic relationships between for-profit and nonprofit culture producers is increasingly important as digital technologies and regulatory change reallocate property rights in sounds and images. What functions previously carried out by nonprofit institutions can better be undertaken by commercial bodies, and what significant functions carried out by commercial firms are being left out in the cold as the result of

corporate restructuring, such that nonprofits should be encouraged to take them over?

2. The Politics of Censorship. Are current censorship efforts more extensive or more efficacious than those of the past? To what extent do conflicts over artworks reflect change in Americans' tolerance, in the organization of intolerance, or in the access of the intolerant to provocative art? To understand current threats to freedom of expression, we need systematic scholarship that is both historical and quantitative.

3. The Politics of Cultural Planning. Community cultural planning has become popular in recent years and many local arts agencies or similar organizations have prepared "plans." What form do these take, who is responsible for them, whose voices and interests are represented in the plans, and what influence do they have?

4. Politics in Artistic Fields.

a. What factors influence the capacity of artists and arts institutions to organize to pursue collective agendas? Why have the arts (apparently) been so ineffective in pursuing legislative ends? What can we learn by comparing such efforts in the arts to those in other policy domains (higher education, health, the environment) where nonprofit organizations are prominent?

b. What structural conditions and strategies facilitate or block the emergence of new artistic schools or styles? Research using formal network-analytic techniques, which resonate closely with such theoretical frameworks as those of Bourdieu and H. White, would seem critical. Sociologists of art can learn from sociologists of science in pushing such work forward.

5. The Arts in Politics. Under what conditions do artists' communities become sites of organization for political change (and under what conditions are artists apolitical)? To what extent and under what conditions do art, music, and literature play a catalytic role in social movement efforts, either as sources of identity, cohesion, or ideas? Here we can learn from students of religion.

#### Art First

*Judith R. Blau, University of North Carolina*

Is it sheer chance that the NEA was the first victim of Congress, in the vanguard of the phalanges of justice-enhancing, rights-conferring, restitutive programs (AFDC, OASDHI, SSI, EPA, SOP, SLS, FISL, OSHA, Pell grants, OE, HUD, ETA, Medicare, HHS, NSF, Medicaid, SSA, DOL, DOC), to take a beating in congressional budgets and executive expenditures from which the heavy-hitting, be-tough, lock-um-up money-makers<sup>1</sup> (DOD, BFAT, INS, CIA, and FBP) were exempt?<sup>2</sup> Of course, federal budgets and executive spending do not necessarily reflect public priorities.

This all may be a mere blip in our halcyon drift towards the Great Society. Micro-politics at its worst. But why art first? Before starving children, the elderly, the environment, education, public transportation, safety regulations in chicken plants, disabled, the ill, homeless, the aged, dilapidated inner-city housing? Was the attack on the NEA for artists' subversiveness? One reason I ask is that the Happenings of the 1960s were pretty subversive—couples bagged in burlap sacks shimmy shammed on the floor while being pelted with used copies of W. D. Ross's *Nichomachean Ethics*. No one got the point, and no one so much as peeped.<sup>3</sup>

One answer to that question is that it was rational choice, as usual. Hell bent on downsizing, the hatchet was strategically poised. Since the canon was already under attack in the academy—congressional members reasoned—intellectual elites would divide over the NEA, and once divided over art, could not regroup for the homeless and poor. This assumes a political rationality in Congress that defies imagination. Still, one cannot rule out the possibility that there is a Nichomachean caucus that meets in the basement of the Ford House Office Building for the purpose of debating the evil of artistic representations.

Macro-to-middle culturalists may prefer another explanation. To be superficial to the extreme (as my word count is limited by the editor), one might consider the possibility of the confluence of moments in art and those in society that portend transformation (the moments of Vermeer, of Michelangelo, of Dada). There cannot be an empirical test of this, and I suspect that the correlation is about zero, but it is useful to have a conceptual framework that allows us to talk about these possibilities.

Weber's mechanism of "the switchmen" has been ignored<sup>4</sup> because it implies a mere shift in the direction of an institution, such as more education in a credentialing society ups the ante of requisite qualifications. Yet the metaphor (literally, someone who changes the direction of the rail, "Weichensteller der Bahnen"<sup>5</sup>) can be interpreted in the larger context of Weber's writings to mean a transformation that is accompanied by deep, underlying contradictions.<sup>6</sup> I have elsewhere translated this as "the toggle switch," to imply that the inside of the gadget (circuitry) may not look like the outside.<sup>7</sup> In short, the dialectic Weber suggests is that we view art as a leading indicator of complex, large-scale social and economic transformations in society. Art may be confounded with other institutions that are less opaque in theory, but bafflingly so as praxis. As Plato wrote, "Soc[rates said]: The best rhapsodist might 'narrativize' the chariot driver, but could not be one." (Actually, the conventional translation is, "speak for," and this raises interesting Geertzian conundrums of its own, assuming Socrates meant all the others besides the rhapsodist, and including the poor and the homeless.)

#### The Arts in Status Group Politics

*Richard Peterson, Vanderbilt University*

The National Endowment for the Arts may well not survive the present passion for Federal Government budget cutting. But the numerous recent arguments over pornographic art and censorship suggest its chances of survival have more to do with *status group politics* than with shrinking the national debt.

As DiMaggio, Levine and others have shown, the category of "fine art" was created in the final third of the nineteenth century as arts appreciation became an important resource for showing high status in the United States. The newly rich were willing to lavishly support the arts as their ticket of admission into "polite society."

While the creation of the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities in the 1960s might be seen as a major final step in establishing fine art as the state-sanctioned currency of cultural capital, quite a different reading now seems

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more accurate. Beginning earlier, but accelerating since the Second World War, members of the elite were no longer *willing* to finance the arts, and the Endowment was created to shift the increasing “burden” of arts support from the elite to the state.

Much of the Arts Endowment money went to the major elite arts organizations; however, the cumulative thrust of its activities worked to debase the value of fine art as a status marker. NEA rhetoric suggested convincingly (if not accurately) that the fine arts were available to all, and more importantly, by valorizing jazz, folk, and other non-elite forms as *art*, suggested that all activities could make a claim to aesthetic (status) value. It suggested that there was nothing distinctive about the fine arts or the appreciation thereof.

But NEA policy was more symptom than cause. Fine arts appreciation had been losing its value as an elite status marker since the 1920s, and, as Judith Balfe, Darren Sherkat and I have shown (with NEA money), controlling for education, age, etc., fine arts attendance is drastically lower for each succeeding cohort born since World War Two.

This does *not* mean that aesthetic choices are no longer important as status markers but it suggests that the standard images of the high status snob and the lowbrow slob need to be scrapped. How cultural choices actually work as status markers in the U.S. today is less clear, but suggestive insights are found in the work of Michèle Lamont, David Halle and others. The data Bethany Bryson, Roger Kern and I have analyzed suggest that, far from being exclusive snobs, people at the top have wide ranging, even omnivorous tastes. Also those near the bottom, rather than being indiscriminating couch potatoes, have narrow tastes that are vehemently set against the equally univorous tastes of others at about their same status level.

In the late 1990s the battle ground of status group politics has shifted to the commercial arts and our old nemesis, Jesse Helms, is a key player here too. Three examples must suffice. Rap music is the butt of status group politics as seen for example in the hypocritical actions of Time Warner regarding “censorship.” The corporate appropriation of “intellectual property” stifles individual and oppositional artistic creativity. And the crucial battles over control of internet communication are just in the skirmish stage. We cultural sociologists know precious little about all this, but we must learn and actively engage the issues in these arenas of cultural politics.

#### **Critical Sociological Concerns Regarding the Arts and Politics** *Judith Huggins Balfe, CUNY*

Having detailed my perspective on the sociology of the arts in these pages two years ago (Fall 1994), I will here note only the questions that have since become more urgent.

We well understand the production of culture in general and the arts in particular, through many years of case studies and increasingly sophisticated analyses. Why should we be surprised by the current culture wars? However, given our methodological agnosticism about aesthetics (further undermined by the humanists’ embrace of deconstructionism: a little sociology is a dangerous thing!), we do not understand enough of the reverse: how do the arts produce society? How do they affect its changing power relations and its formal politics?

If we recognize that, like religion, the arts can serve to comfort the afflicted as well as afflicting the comfortable, we

may be better able to understand the appeal of traditional and conventional art forms and the absence of appeal of avant garde works—at least to many people. Rather than just advancing social change through individual self-expression (the grounds on which liberals have tended to support the arts), the arts also serve to confirm deeply conservative impulses for order and tradition. Which arts, in what contexts, with what success, for whom? How might we compare the effect of Nazi aesthetic practices, from film to mass rallies and parades, to those of more benign regimes such as that of the French Ministry of Culture? If the arts are intentionally politicized in such cases and given vast public support accordingly, are they of less political effectiveness in the United States without much public support?

Analysts of media and advertising have become skilled in understanding differences in reception, but those focusing on the fine arts (where form is at least as important as content in the meaning that is conveyed) have been less successful in doing so. How might we operationalize the effects of the fine arts? Do they ever change people’s attitudes, or do they work primarily (as Suzanne Langer said) by clarifying and solidifying existing predispositions? That is no small thing in eliminating cant, confusion and anxiety, and providing a sense of solace and/or direction. But how do we test this? One op-ed piece has suggested that we test the impact of Vermeer by locking Clinton, Dole and Gingrich in the closed gallery to see if they could reach agreement on the budget in the presence of that serenity—itsself created just at the end of the 30 Years War and in the midst of other religious conflicts that had ravaged all of Europe, including the Netherlands, as in Bosnia today.

It has been hard to see how the arts work politically—and why they become the focus of attack, accordingly—because we have been looking at the art-society link from one direction only, with society or politics as subject and the arts as object. We must reverse the causal arrows and develop better tools for measuring what in fact the arts do—not just what their advocates assert that they do—if as sociologists we are to add anything sensible to the current debates.

#### *Gladys Engel Lang and Kurt Lang, University of Washington*

Artists depict the world from a very personal perspective, employing carefully chosen patterns of color or sound or words to convey their visions of human relationships to the supernatural, to a common past, to contemporary conditions and personalities. All art is to this extent political, even when it contains no overt political message. In fact, works that are glaringly propagandistic are seldom treated as art until such time as critics focus on their underlying esthetics rather than their persuasive intent. Obviously, the relationship between art and politics is double-edged, encompassing the most subtle influences of each on the other and raising many intriguing questions each of us is free to pursue according to taste.

Our preferred focus has been the influence of politics on the form, style, and content of artistic work and, ultimately, on its selective entry into the evolving canon, which constitutes, so to speak, the collective cultural heritage. The specific questions that grow out of such a focus have to do with what is officially sponsored, otherwise encouraged and discouraged, and what is rejected and downright forbidden by a political regime or other political entity.

In mapping a research prospectus, we would distinguish between politics external and internal to the more circumscribed world of art. External political influences emanate from governmental policies. The public funding of art training, of performances, of exhibitions, and so forth have often been used to promote a “national style,” while construction projects and programs for preserving and archiving precious objects serve to document present and past “greatness.” Artistic creativity can also be seriously constrained by censorship, public degradation of art, and punitive measures against nonconforming artists. Here the purpose is usually explicitly political.

No less important are the internal politics of artists and their response to prevailing ideological currents. These are manifest not only in stylistic revolts and secessions against academies with close ties to the political establishment but also in the movements to restructure society in which artistic rebels have involved themselves—as did the futurists, constructivists, expressionists, and American artists of the 1930s who sided with the political left.

A historical, and preferably a comparative, perspective is needed to illuminate the various interfaces between politics and art as, for example, whether certain modernist styles are intrinsically connected with a particular brand of politics or due simply to a fortuitous coincidence of events and personalities. Futurists in Italy were nationalistic and enthusiastic supporters of the First World War whereas in Russia they were pacifist and internationalist. In the end, both found themselves pushed aside, more completely in the Soviet Union, by a regime they had so enthusiastically embraced. Their influence spread largely through their international connections, such as the politically and artistically progressive *Bauhaus*, which further developed leads pioneered by constructivists. After the Second World War, when the USA had become the dominant center for abstract art, some reviled these innovations as an escape from the more openly political art of the depression.

To further confound the matter: some Nazi leaders championed the expressionists, many of whom had been deeply involved in radical politics, as exponents of an inherently German style opposed to French dominance of modernism, yet later ostracized these same artists. Through focused curatorial activity, this tradition has since been reinstated under the rubric of “classic modernism.”

These examples identify two broader problem areas. First, what are the linkages between politics and style? Is there an association between modernism and radicalism of the left or right? Do dictatorships inherently favor classicism? Is abstract art, especially as exemplified by music, likely to have greater leeway to experiment with new forms? Such issues deserve study.

Second, what are the dynamics behind changes in style and revaluations of past art? Are they “cultural,” like the cyclical shift between a sensate and ideational phase discerned by Sorokin, or “esthetic” as when an exhausted classicism is replaced by romanticism (Chambers)? Or are they a response to social and political change, a view closer to that of such Marxists as Hauser?

*Victoria D. Alexander, University of Surrey*

All combatants in the culture wars lament the politicization of art—though what “politicization” entails is

sharply contested. Conservatives worry that pornography or otherwise morally bankrupt material is masquerading as art. They prefer traditional, “non-political” art that celebrates the American way or the glory of God’s creations. Liberals, on the other hand, despise the privileging of straight, white, male expression. They value works that conservatives criticize, art produced by various dispossessed persons and art that attacks the unfairly empowered in our corrupt system. Ironically, while recognizing the hegemonic powers of art, many on the left think that it’s a shame that art has been dragged into the Congress as a punching-bag proxy for larger debates. Art, they believe, should occupy a special place above the political fray.

Both sides may be sorry about some form of politicization, but contemporary art can never be non-political. All art bears the imprint of its underwriting and all art carries some extra-aesthetic message. Italian Renaissance art, for example, was commissioned by a patron, depicted stories from the Bible, and often identified the patron by his portrait or family symbol. What is this besides a commercial for Christianity, with some glory for the patron thrown in?

In fact, I ask students in my sociology of art classes if we could consider Italian Renaissance Art as an archaic form of advertising. Students react strongly and negatively to this suggestion. They argue that art is carefully executed with fine materials. Clearly, a TV ad for the local Dodge dealership is not equivalent to a Donatello, but aren’t many advertisements very expensive and very carefully crafted? Students also argue that commercial artists may have some talent, but they are severely constrained by their corporate clients. My students are surprised to learn just how much control Quattrocento patrons had over even the greatest painters.

But art, students say, exists on a higher plain. Modern commercials are crass and pedestrian. Perhaps true, but as DiMaggio and Levine have shown so convincingly, the “sacralization” of art is a modern achievement. Further, the frescos in Italian Renaissance churches were meant to communicate religious messages to an illiterate populace. They were not for an educated elite alone. In this way, in its day Quattrocento art was a form of popular culture.

Lang and Lang suggest that political art can be judged aesthetically only with sufficient passage of time. When viewers have forgotten the non-aesthetic messages in artwork, then they will be able to relate at a purely aesthetic level. This indeed may be the case. But then let me then suggest this heretical possibility. In the future, undergraduates may study the best of late 20th century commercial culture in Art 101 rather than the objects produced by our current avant-garde.

My students are right in one sense, however. Our mass, capitalist society operates quite differently than earlier societies, and one cannot easily compare cultural objects produced by these different systems. The “political” message that underlies much of today’s mass culture, as many Marxists scholars have pointed out, is the celebration of consumption. Today’s political avant garde reflects the multiculturalism and identity politics inherent in America’s rich diversity. Our political sensitivities to different peoples doesn’t extend, however, to dead-for-500-years Italians—with important conse-

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quences for aesthetic judgment. For us, Renaissance artworks are objects of beauty (in which a political message is hidden). In contemporary art, the strength of the political message in a work often suggests the value, the “beauty” of the work. Objects can be beautiful even if, as in some avant-garde work, they are shocking and horrible to look at. Or, in the reverse, pleasant-looking advertisements are considered ugly. Though I personally don’t think ads are the best of our culture, I wonder if future aestheticians will agree with us. They might prefer the slick, eye-pleasing images of advertisement to the more challenging work of our time as the sales pitches and political messages fade. Perhaps the best way to de-politicize the arts is to wait a couple hundred years.

### *The Langs reply to Alexander*

We find ourselves in essential agreement with Victoria Alexander that “all art carries some extra-aesthetic message.” Yet this message can be hidden or so deeply embedded in cultural understandings that neither its creator nor its consumers are aware of it—an intrinsic ambiguity that accounts for the controversies over what is “art” and what is promotional and/or deserves to be banned as pornographic. As sociologists, we need to address the conceptual as well as the empirical issues raised by this ambiguity.

Arthur Danto maintains—rightly, in our opinion—that it is the way of looking at an object that turns it into art. Whether a nude Venus by Titian or Rubens is pornography depends on the beholder. For most of us, the political message of Nazi art, a subject we have been investigating, is gross and has so far blocked recurrent efforts to view it esthetically. But can such works never be viewed as art? Certainly, the advertising posters by Mucha and Toulouse-Lautrec as well as some of the more patently political works by Russian revolutionaries and Italian fascists have been admired for the futurist, constructivist, and other modernist motifs they incorporate.

But does that mean that truly anything, even the tritest of Nazi art, goes? We think not, though some radical labeling theorists might hold otherwise. The porcelain urinal exhibited by Duchamp in 1917 under the label of “Fountain” amounted to a (political) statement, a comment on art practices, etc. The original, if put on display today, would arouse interest primarily as a historical relic rather than as an art object, partly because of the changing context but also because the object may not have the potential for an esthetic experience (Nelson Goodman).

We can do more than debate the question. The various ways in which the passage of time, among other influences, changes our viewing of objects whose *raison d’être* was propagandistic is amenable to empirical investigation. Depending on perspective it could fit either into Par. 2 or Par. 4 of Paul DiMaggio’s admirably complete research agenda.

### *Notes for Blau contribution*

<sup>1</sup>That is, “money makers” in terms of our national accounting system. It should be noted for the record that Simon Kuznets described the national accounting system and the GNP as being inaccurate indicators of the social health of the nation.

<sup>2</sup>Forbes blames the “alphabet agencies” (AFDC, HUD, etc.) for high spending, while failing to note where most of the money goes: Department of Defense (DOD), Bureau of Fire Arms and Tobacco

(BFAT), Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), CIA, and Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBP).

<sup>3</sup>Admittedly, these were not supported by public funding.

<sup>4</sup>Not entirely ignored. See Ahmad Sadri, *Max Weber’s Sociology of Intellectuals* (Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>5</sup>*Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*. Vol 1. (J. L. B. Mohn, 1920, p. 252).

<sup>6</sup>“Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions” and “The Social Psychology of the World Religions.” Pp. 267-301, 323-62 in H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (Oxford University Press, 1946).

<sup>7</sup>J. R. Blau, “The Toggle Switch of Institutions.” *Social Forces*, forthcoming. The toggle logo on your screen, and your “click” on the mouse disguise a lot of complexity that most of us know little about. □

## Crane on Culture Syllabi

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Second, there does appear to be a set of texts that constitutes a ‘canon’ in the Sociology of Culture as seen in the syllabi in this volume and its predecessor. Three components of this canon were examined: (i) scholars whose works were frequently assigned; (ii) dominant theoretical perspectives; and (iii) major themes and topics.

There were twice as many frequently assigned scholars in the 1995 volume as in the 1989 one, suggesting that there is now more agreement in the field about the importance of certain scholars.<sup>6</sup> In the 1989 volume, only seven scholars were included in seven or more lists, while in the 1995 volume, there were fifteen scholars in that category. Most were cited consistently for a particular work (either an article or a book). For a few of these authors, numerous works were cited.

The increase in the number of frequently assigned European scholars in the present volume is striking. In 1989, only one such scholar was European, whereas in 1995 almost half were European (6 out of 15). All but one of these European scholars were used infrequently in the 1989 syllabi. Since all of them are theorists, the 1995 data suggest an increase in concern with theory.

The syllabi in these volumes also allow us to track the rise and fall of various theoretical orientations. Most of these syllabi, even those devoted to subspecialties within the field, are fairly eclectic, including a range of perspectives and orientations in the field. Which perspectives were most likely to be included?

In the 1989 volume, the theoretical orientation that was most frequently included in syllabi was the Production of Culture. It was represented more than twice as frequently as the next leading perspective (see Table 1). In the 1995 volume, this orientation has dropped to third place. Its place at the top has been taken by a very different perspective, Postmodernism, that appeared in only one syllabus in the 1989 volume.

The Production of Culture perspective has stimulated numerous empirical studies based on the hypothesis that the characteristics of organizations, social worlds, and social networks influence the nature of recorded culture created or distributed in these contexts. By contrast, Postmodernism is a theoretical perspective that has engendered relatively few empirical studies. In the 1995 syllabi, Postmodernism was generally discussed in terms of the debate over the shift from modernism to postmodernism. This debate was typically rep-

resented by European scholars such as Lyotard, Habermas, Foucault and Baudrillard, and the American humanist Jameson. Only three syllabi included studies that attempt to analyze the impact of Postmodernism on the styles of specific genres of high and popular culture.

**Table 1: Frequently Used Theoretical Orientations, 1989 vs. 1995**  
(Theoretical orientations appearing in 5 or more syllabi; numbers show how many syllabi use each orientation.)

1989	1995
Production of Culture (19)	Postmodernism (14)
Marxism (9)	Symbolic Boundaries (13)
Structuralism/Semiotics (8)	Production of Culture (11)
Symbolic Interactionism (6)	Critical Theory (11)
Critical Theory (5)	Structuralism/Semiotics (9)
Functionalism (5)	Symbolic Interactionism (8)
Symbolic Boundaries (5)	Cultural Studies (5)
	Marxism (5)
	Poststructuralism(5)

Unlike Postmodernism, Symbolic Boundaries, or the study of how cultural capital solidifies class distinctions, has led to research. Developed by a European scholar, Bourdieu, this theoretical orientation has stimulated empirical research both in Europe and the U.S.

Other changes reflected in the 1995 volume include the decline of Functionalism and Marxism, although the importance of Critical Theory increased. Symbolic Interactionism was represented in these lists largely through the work of Howard Becker on art worlds. The importance of Structuralism/Semiotics remained stable. Interest in sociologies of culture based on classical theorists, such as Durkheim and Weber, appears to be confined to a small group of scholars.

Judging from these lists, Cultural Studies, a British import that has been very influential in Communication and Literary Studies, remains peripheral in the Sociology of Culture in the United States, since only a small segment of the Cultural Studies literature is represented. The Cultural Studies approach to subcultures as seen in the work of Hebdige and Fiske appeared on several lists but the Cultural Studies approach to media as developed by Stuart Hall appears to have had virtually no impact.

Substantive themes and topics recurring frequently in these lists also changed between 1989 and 1995 (see Table 2). In 1989, the most frequently occurring topic was “Culture and society”: how society at the macro level influences culture or vice versa. “Culture and social change,” specifically how culture itself is affected by social change or how culture leads to social change, was also an important topic in the 1989 syllabi. Both these categories are much less important in the 1995 volume. Instead, “Culture & politics/power,” a category that appeared on only a few lists in the 1989 volume, has become the leading topic. This topic, combined with the interest in Symbolic Boundaries as a theoretical orientation, suggests that broad, macro approaches have been replaced with more specific concepts and tools for investigation. Changes in the ways in which “Meanings and symbols” are examined can be explained in a similar fashion. In the 1989 volume, this typically referred to studies of cultural meanings at the macro level. In the 1995 volume, analysis of meaning is more likely to take the form of an analysis of texts (using semiotics and discourse analysis) or an analysis of the specific contexts in which meaning is socially constructed.

The question of the relationship between high culture and popular culture, an important issue in critical theory, for example, remains an important topic. Interest in culture and policy has declined since 1989, while interest in the sociology of knowledge remains peripheral.

Several topics that in 1989 were either non-existent or peripheral have attracted more attention since then, specifically, “Collective memory,” “Reception studies,” and issues of method and measurement. “Reception studies”—concern with how audiences, publics, and consumers respond to, interpret, or reinterpret culture—has largely replaced the study of the characteristics of audiences and publics, and, more specifically, the study of taste cultures. The public now tends to be viewed in terms of subcultures or ‘interpretative communities’ that either resist the dominant culture or create their own forms of culture. Syllabi are now more likely to include topics related to connections between culture and “Gender, ethnicity and race,” reflecting the concern with how culture affects specific subgroups within the population.

**Table 2: Frequently Occurring Themes and Topics, 1989 vs. 1995**  
(Themes and topics appearing in 6 or more syllabi; numbers indicate how many syllabi include each theme or topic.)

1989	1995
Culture and society (13)	Culture & politics/power (13)
Meaning, symbols (13)	Gender, ethnicity, race (12)
High vs. popular culture (12)	High vs. popular culture (11)
Mass communication, media (11)	Meaning, symbols (11)
Culture and social change (7)	Mass communication, media (10)
Audience charact./choices (6)	Culture and class (8)
Gender, ethnicity, race (6)	Method, measurement (8)
	Collective memory (6)
	Culture and society (6)
	Reception studies (6)

Finally, approaches to mass communication and the media have become more diverse: in addition to the production of culture approach and the study of media effects, there is a stronger emphasis on textual analysis, reception studies, and the social construction of meaning in the media.

To summarize, the Sociology of Culture, both in 1989 and 1995, could be said to have had a ‘canon.’ However, the canon changed dramatically during the six-year interval between the two volumes. In 1989, the field was dominated by approaches based on American theoretical perspectives, including the Production of Culture, a Functionalist approach to audiences, and a Symbolic Interactionist approach to subcultures and creative occupations. While the Production of Culture approach continues to be important, the canon is now mainly oriented toward European rather than American theory and toward the study of the relationships between culture and politics, power, and class, and gender, ethnic, and racial differences.

In general, there is more use of theoretical categories in place of substantive categories, an indication of the increasing sophistication of the field. While it is clear that the study of culture is no longer simply the study of different forms of culture, such as art and popular culture, but is perceived as an integral part of the study of social life, this is not yet reflected in changes in course titles, away from “The Sociology of Culture” in favor of “Cultural Sociology.”

(continued on page 8)

(Crane on Culture Syllabi, from page 7)

In spite of the availability of several candidates, there are no texts or collections of readings that are widely used. (The volume of syllabi contains a list of such texts and collections.) Judging from these lists, instructors in the field prefer to produce their own packages of xerox materials, supplemented with assignments from books and journals.

As this small study illustrates, syllabi provide us with a useful set of snapshots of a field at particular periods of time. Undoubtedly, the next set of snapshots will reveal new changes and priorities. Finally, it is worth noting that a substantial amount of published material related to the Sociology of Culture rarely or never appears on these lists and is therefore not being assimilated into the knowledge base of the field.

## Appendix: List of Contributing Authors and Course Titles

### 1. Surveys of the Sociology of Culture

*Courses entitled "Sociology of Culture":* Judith Blau, North Carolina; Wendy Griswold, Chicago; Stephen Hart, SUNY–Buffalo; Lyn Spillman, Notre Dame; Paul Lichterman, Wisconsin.

*Other titles:* Culture and Society: Sociological Studies (Jeffrey Alexander, UCLA); Sociological Approaches to the Study of Culture: Graduate Seminar (Mabel Berezin, Pennsylvania); Seminar in the Sociology of Culture (Thomas Cushman, Wellesley); Approaches to the Sociology of Culture (Priscilla Ferguson, Columbia); Proseminar in Theory and Culture (Jeffrey Goldfarb, New School); Culture and Theory (Orville Lee, Northwestern); Cultural Theory and Cultural Analysis (Paul Lichterman, Wisconsin); Culture and National Difference (Ann Swidler, Berkeley); Fundamentals of Culture and Society: Theoretical Perspectives (Vera Zolberg, New School).

### 2. Subfields and Theoretical Perspectives

*Arts and Literature:* The Arts and Politics (Judith Balfe, College of Staten Island); The Politics of Taste (Judith Balfe); The Arts in Society (Paul DiMaggio, Princeton); Popular Literature and Its Institutions (Paul DiMaggio); Sociology of Art (Nancy Weiss Hanrahan, George Mason); Sociology of the Arts (Rosanne Martorella, William Paterson); Culture, the Arts, and Society (Vera Zolberg, New School).

*Culture and Inequality:* Cultural Systems: Culture and Inequality in Comparative Perspective (Michèle Lamont, Princeton).

*Memory:* Sociology of Collective Memory (Jeffrey Olick, Columbia).

*Political Culture:* Public Opinion (Nina Eliasoph, Wisconsin);

Political Culture (Magali Larson, Temple); Patriotism and National Ritual (Lyn Spillman, Notre Dame).

*Popular Culture, Media, and Communication:* Sociology of Popular Culture (Marshall Battani, UC–Davis); Sociology of Media and Popular Culture (Diana Crane, Pennsylvania); Sociology of Popular Culture (Thomas Cushman, Wellesley); Leisure, Mass Media, and Culture (John Ryan, Clemson); Communication and Popular Culture (Barbie Zelizer, Temple).

*Specific Theoretical Perspectives:* Cognitive Sociology (Eviatar Zerubavel, Rutgers); Critical Modern Social Theory (Braulio Munoz, Swarthmore); Culture, Symbols, and Social Interaction (Karen Cerulo, Rutgers); Discourse Analysis (Robin Wagner-Pacifi, Swarthmore); Cultural Studies in Communication (Barbie Zelizer, Temple); Seminar in Social Theory/Critical Cultural Theory: Critical Theory, Poststructuralism, Postmodernism (Darlaine Gardetto, Missouri).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>My thanks to Michèle Lamont, Magali Sarfatti Larson, and Richard Peterson for helpful comments during the preparation of this article.

<sup>2</sup>*Course Syllabi for the Sociology of Culture*, edited by Diana Crane and Magali Sarfatti Larson (Washington: Teaching Resources Center, American Sociological Association, 1996).

<sup>3</sup>Since a relatively small number of people contributed to both volumes, I cannot claim that my conclusions are based on an analysis of syllabi from a representative sample of members. However, both volumes include contributions from scholars at small and large institutions and at prestigious and less prestigious institutions and from senior and junior scholars. Several well-known scholars in the field were unable to contribute to the present volume because they have not taught courses related to the sociology of culture recently.

In the 1989 volume, there were 30 contributors and 37 syllabi; in the new volume, there are also 30 contributors and 37 syllabi. These syllabi represent courses that were given in the years preceding the date of publication of the volume and not necessarily in the year during which the volume was published.

<sup>4</sup>Significantly, *Contemporary Sociology* now uses the term, "Sociology of Culture," as the heading for reviews of books on cultural topics. In 1989, the comparable heading was "Sociology of Art, Knowledge, Science, Religion, and Sports."

<sup>5</sup>Diana Crane (ed.), *Sociology of Culture: Emerging Theoretical Perspectives* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1994); Elizabeth Long (ed.), *Sociology of Culture and Cultural Studies* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1996).

<sup>6</sup>Self-citations (i.e. references to articles and books by the authors of the syllabi) were excluded in computing these data. □

## Books of Note

Richard A. Peterson, Vanderbilt University

**Editor's note:** Are you unhappy that your book hasn't been mentioned in Books of Note? If we haven't heard of it, we can't cover it. Send information on your book to Richard Peterson at the Department of Sociology; Box 1635, Station B; Vanderbilt University; Nashville, TN 37235; bitnet: petersra@vuctrvax.

Denzin, Norman K., editor. *Culture Studies*. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press. The articles use interpretive critical theory, qualitative inquiry, media studies, etc. to reveal the cultural practices that shape the meanings of race, ethnicity, class, nationality, and gender in the contemporary world.

McNeely, Connie. *Constructing the Nation-State: International Organization and Pre-*

*scriptive Action*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. According to the Greenwood Publishing Group press release, "The author delves into an investigation of the impact of various aspects of international organization on nation-state structures and practices and, therefore, on the patterns and behaviors that constitute a world culture." Interns are everywhere! Rather, McNeely shows the role of weak international bodies in shaping the political world culture constituted in terms of imagined communities in the form of nation-states.

Sanderson, Stephen K., editor. *Civilizations and World Systems: Studying World-Historical Change*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press. Sanderson neatly counterpoises pieces

by authors working in the "world systems" and the "comparative civilization" perspectives. The authors discuss their own data and research agendas and critique those of others.

Harrington, C. Lee, and Denise D. Bielby. *Soap Fans: Pursuing Pleasure and Making Meaning in Everyday Life*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. Harrington and Bielby capture the meanings created in the complex TV soap opera world. They gain their understanding not only by interviewing viewers and looking at soaps but also by interviewing people centrally involved in producing soaps, those who manage fan activities, and by following the dynamics of fan clubs, newsletters, electronic bulletin boards, and public events.

Friedlander, Paul. *Rock and Roll: A Social History*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. More a musicological than a social history, Friedlander gives a good introduction to the changes in the music and the people responsible from early 1950s proto-rock through mid-1970s punk.

Epstein, Jonathan S, editor. *Adolescents and Their Music: If It's Too Loud, You're Too Old*. New York: Garland Publishing. Detailed studies show the meanings of 1980s-90s youth music—metal, rap, grunge, MTV, pop, alternative—for its makers and its audiences.

Carney, George O., editor. *Fast Food, Stock Cars, and Rock-N-Roll: Place and Space in American Pop Culture*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield. The authors show the local and regional grounding of diverse cultural practices from music, food, and adornment to religion, architecture, and sport through the lens of contemporary geography.

Weinstein, Michael. *Culture/Flesh: Explorations of Post-Civilized Modernity*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield. This is the era of “post-civilized modernity” in which the goal of transforming nature into culture has been achieved and in which there are no trans-personal principles. As a result people feel a chronic inability to be happy. Weinstein proposes “objective hedonism” for this world of polytheistic liberal fascism.

Billson, Janet Mancini. *Keepers of the Culture: The Power of Tradition in Women's Lives*. New York: Lexington Books. Drawing illustrations from many societies, Billson shows that women have power as the prime keepers of the traditions that oppress them. She suggests how women can reshape this traditional culture for their collective advantage.

Ressler, Robert K., Ann W. Burgess, and John E. Douglas. *Sexual Homicide: Patterns and Motives*. New York: Lexington Books. The authors provide a practical guide to identifying and apprehending sexual killers.

Hamilton, Marybeth. *When I'm Bad I'm Better*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers. Hamilton argues that the key to Mae West's eighty-year career was her expression of in-your-face working class sexuality. She also describes the changing public response to West over the decades. See also the related books in the Minnesota press set.

### *Four from Guilford*

Diamond, Sara. *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States*. How was the American right, which began as a small clique of World War II conservative intellectuals, transformed into a well-healed movement representing millions of ordinary citizens. Diamond answers the question by tracing the develop-

ment of four types of right-wing movements over the past 50 years—the racist right, the anti-communist movement, the Christian right, and neoconservatives.

Sclove, Richard E. *Democracy and Technology*. Shows how modern technologies contribute to vexing social problems from the continuing subordination of women and workers to widespread political alienation. Sclove suggests ways toward more democratic outcomes.

Goldman and Stephen Papson. *Sign Wars: The Cluttered Landscape of Advertising*. Using many examples from recent billboard ad campaigns, the authors provide a critical review of the entire culture of advertising in which self-depreciation and cynicism are introduced to attract jaded viewers.

Kirby, Kathleen, M. *Indifferent Boundaries: Spatial Concepts of Human Subjectivity*. Kirby suggests that the concepts of identity are vitally grounded in metaphors of and assumptions about space. She shows how the changes in real space have influenced conceptual space from the Renaissance to the present.

### *Eight from Sage*

Sarbin, Theodore R. and John I. Kitsuse, editors. *Constructing the Social*. The authors focus on human agency in constructing the social in a range of micro and macro contexts. They also outline contemporary contests over cultural constructs such as intelligence, anxiety, and aging.

Alasuutari, Pertti. *Researching Culture: Qualitative Methods and Cultural Studies*. A well informed and profusely illustrated integration of culture-studies and qualitative-research methodologies. Alasuutari walks the student through the stages of the qualitative research process.

Falk, Phasi. *The Consuming Body*. Falk links changing notions of the body and the emergence of consumer culture by examining issues of taste, pornography and media advertising.

Simons, Herbert W. and Michael Billig, editors. *After Postmodernism: Reconstructing Ideology Critique*. The authors turn the acid-bath of postmodernist criticism on postmodernist criticism. Positivism and empiricism survive as the prime bugaboos.

Radtke, H. Lorraine and Henderikus J. Stam, editors. *Power/Gender: Social Relations in Theory and Practice*. The authors show how gender is constructed through the practices of power.

Kahn, Joel S. *Culture, Multiculture, and Postculture*. Kahn notes that in recent decades culture has been a prime basis for drawing distinctions among people, and contrary to postmodernists sees globalization as leading

to the multiplication of distinctions rather than to their withering away.

Maffesoli, Michel. *The Time of Tribes*. With the fading of nation, class, and occupation as sources for constructing identity, Maffesoli recognizes the emergence of a wide range of neo-tribal taste-group identities built around cultural artifacts such as sports, music, fads, and the like.

Featherstone, Mike. *Undoing Culture: Globalization, Postmodernism, and Identity*. In effect, Featherstone here is arguing that culture must be disempowered so it can no longer serve as the source for the antagonisms recognized by the previous authors, Joel Kahn and Michel Maffesoli.

### *University of Minnesota Has Eleven*

Curry, Ramona. *Too Much of a Good Thing: Mae West as Cultural Icon*. In focusing on Mae West, Curry shows how icons of popular culture often distill contested social issues, often serving contradictory functions. In the 1930s Mae West was the lightning rod for debates over morality and censorship. In the 1980s her flamboyant associations with gay black men made her a troubling figure for both gays and feminists.

Staiger, Janet. *Bad Women: Regulating Sexuality in Early American Culture*. Staiger shows how the early silent films formed a field in which the public and private place of women could be visualized and discussed at just the time that women's place in society was being re-imagined—with the aid of the moving picture.

Gray, Herman. *Watching Race: Television and the Struggle for Blackness*. Gray shows the complexities of understanding reasons for the growing number and changing content of situation comedies as well as news media featuring African Americans. He also illustrates problems in assessing the implications of the programming on audiences, black and white.

Lenson, David. *On Drugs*. Lenson details the experiences and dynamics of using drugs of pleasure and desire—nicotine, marijuana, alcohol, LSD, caffeine and cocaine—challenging the accepted notions of sobriety and addiction. Questioning the sense of condemning millions of citizens to lives of concealment and deceit, he calls for an end to the War on Drugs and its correlates, property crime, violent crime, bribery and police corruption.

Canclini, Nestor Garcia. *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*. In a carefully nuanced discussion, Canclini considers how Latin American cultures like Mexico can enter the world system without sacrificing their cultural iden-

(continued on page 10)

tity. As the process seems to be working, elitist exploitation is justified in the name of protecting tradition.

Brodkey, Linda. *Writing Permitted in Designated Areas Only*. Brodkey takes to task the way writing courses are taught in the U.S. For generations they have focused on the techniques of writing style without focusing on the content of what is being written. This reinforces the status quo, she says, and students should be evaluated for self expression.

Smith, Sidonie and Julia Watson, editors. *Getting a Life: Everyday Uses of Autobiography*. Rhetorical autobiographies are created in resumes, personal ads, talk-shows, self-help groups, and “personality profiles” of all sorts. This collection expands our understanding of how we negotiate and commodify identity.

Leap, William L. *Word's Out: Gay Men's English*. Leap illustrates the numerous linguistic devices that contemporary gay men use to reveal themselves to each other without others knowing.

Gordon, Avery F. and Christopher Newfield, editors. *Mapping Multiculturalism*. The authors—almost all located at California institutions—offer cogent critiques of multiculturalism as scholarship and as cultural politics.

Noriega, Chon A. and Ana N. Lopez, editors. *The Ethnic Eye: Latino Media Arts*. The work of Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban American, and Latino film and video makers is examined in detail.

Welchman, John C., editor. *Rethinking Borders*. The distinctive cultures such as “sub-cultural cross-dressing” in Latin America that form along geographical boundaries, form the context for understanding the range of topics central to postmodernism.

### **Frank Cass' Distinctive Four**

Egerton, George, editor. *Political Memoir: Essays on the Politics of Memory*. Numerous attempts to forge and renovate collective memory are analyzed in detail. These range from the British generals of the American Revolution, the national spy services, and Nazi leaders to Indian nationalist leaders, Harry Truman, Richard Nixon, and Margaret Thatcher.

Linehan, Thomas P. *East London for Mosley: The British Union of Fascists in East London and South-West Essex, 1933-1940*. Though socially quite different, East London and South-West Essex were the centers of English fascism. Understanding the appeal of fascism in these two locations provided a key to understanding the contemporary nativist and anti-minority movements of the 1990s.

Bale, John and Joseph Maguire, editors. *The Global Sports Arena: Athletic Talent Migra-*

*tion in an Interdependent World*. The rapidly increasing migration of athletes across regional, national, and continental boundaries is just one indicator of the growing role of sports in the development of the world cultural economy. This should be read together with the next noted work which deals with an earlier chapter in the political-cultural use of sport.

Mongan, J.A., editor. *The Cultural Bond: Sport, Empire, Society*. English Victorians believed in a moral mission to civilize the world they were subduing and drawing into the Empire. They saw sports as a secular religion that taught the values of competition, controlled violence, respect for rules, teamwork, meritocracy, and fair play—all necessary for running the Empire and gaining hegemonic control over the vast numbers of people being incorporated.

### **Seven From the University of Chicago**

Fine, Gary Alan, editor. *A Second Chicago School? The Development of Postwar Sociology*. As shown in eight loving essays, shepherded by Louis Worth and Everett Hughes in the fifteen years following World War II, a group of scholars—notably David Riesman, Herbert Blumer, Erving Goffman, Howard Becker, and Joseph Gusfield—created a “second” Chicago school of sociology distinct from the contemporary functionalist system-building at Harvard and survey research at Columbia. Focusing on topics including deviance, urban life, ethnic relations, work, and the like, they honed the skills of participant observation and perfected the idea of symbolic interactionism that undergirds cultural sociology today.

Wiley, Norbert. *The Semiotic Self*. Wiley, working in the Chicago II tradition, makes the case for the idea of an autonomous self that engages in a internal conversation with its constructed past and future selves in order to responsibly engage other external selves.

Steiner, Wendy. *The Scandal of Pleasure: Art in an Age of Fundamentalism*. Steiner suggests that the recent scandals over art works obliterate the distinction between the figurative and the literal, and she offers a critical vocabulary robust enough to facilitate communication in these often deliberately confrontational times.

Wright, Stuart A. editor. *Armageddon in Waco: Critical Perspectives on the Branch Davidian Conflict*. The selections have been well chosen to walk the reader through the diverse interests and actions leading up to the debacle and its aftermath.

Berliner, Paul F. *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation*. Berliner shows how jazz musicians, individually and collectively, learn to improvise in creating music

together, and in so doing, provides the key to understanding the form.

Harvey, John. *Men in Black*. Concentrating on the general shift away from colorful clothes that began about 1800 among European upper class men, Harvey traces the movement back several centuries to political asceticism and religious warfare using art works, lithographs, engravings, costume books, and descriptive accounts of great occasions. Psychologists have shown that professional sport teams that wear black uniforms are penalized more by referees.

Zerubavel, Yael. *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*. Zerubavel shows how the new nation of Israel has crafted a new past out of diverse traditions and recent events. This is not so much a government created collective memory as a creative interplay between the interests of politicians, writers, and factional interests.

### **Illinois' Eleven Offerings**

Brown, Richard Harvey, editor. *Postmodern Representation: Truth, Power, and Mimesis in the Human Sciences and Public Culture*. Following Foucault, the authors clearly show that the vocabulary of describing is a form of power. The authors focus this insight on theories and practices in the social and medical disciplines. Thus, for example, as the “habitual drunkard” of the 1950s became an “alcoholic,” the power to aid and control passed from the church and community to medical personnel.

Hall, Gwendolyn Midlo, editor. *Love, War, and the 96th Engineers (Colored): The World War II New Guinea Diaries of Captain Hyman Samuelson*. This diary, written a half century ago by a young, white Southern, Jewish officer in charge of African Americans on a Pacific island, gives a very candid picture of race, gender, and class relations.

Lester, Robin. *Stagg's University: The Rise, Decline, and Fall of Big-Time Football at Chicago*. Lester shows how in the brief span of 15 years at the University of Chicago Amos Alonzo Stagg played a leading role in transforming college football into mass entertainment.

Gorn, Elliott, editor. *Muhammad Ali, the People's Champ*. The authors show Muhammad Ali in all of his roles from brilliant boxer and quick wit to Black Muslim and anti-war activist.

Silk, Mark. *Unsecular Media: Making News of Religion in America*. By focusing on recurrent moral formulas in contemporary journalistic discourse, Silk shows that U. S. mass media are not hostile to religion, as is often charged, but express religion-based values that most people share.

Cutler, Irving. *The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb*. Cutler describes the development and distinctive characteristics of each of the Jewish neighborhoods of the Chicago area.

Telotte, J.P. *Replications: A Robotic History of the Science Fiction Form*. By tracing the development of the artificial human in films, Telotte shows how they turn a mirror on contemporary views of the human condition.

Ernst, Daniel, R. *Lawyers Against Labor: From Individual Rights to Corporate Liberalism*. Ernst shows how, over the decades, lawyers have crafted their arguments to shape decisions and interpret laws in order to curb the rights of workers.

Stephan-Norris, Judith and Maurice Zeitlin. *Talking Union*. Using the stories of those involved and contemporary documents, the authors explore the efforts of the United Auto Workers union, in the face of determined opposition from the Ford Auto Company, to create a democratic union in the

racially and politically diverse setting of the huge Ford River Rouge plant.

Pickle, Linda Schelbitzki. *Contented Among Strangers: Rural German-Speaking Women and Their Families in the Nineteenth-Century Midwest*. Because of the rich cultural heritage they worked to perpetuate, the immigrant German women were much more satisfied with the privations and loneliness of life on the vast plains of the Midwest than were their rural Anglo-American sisters.

Carpenter, Jennifer and Sally-Beth MacLean, editors. *Power of the Weak: Studies on Medieval Women*. The authors show the forms of political, sacred, and family-based power that women were able to wield when men were overwhelmingly dominant in the law, custom, and the eyes of God.

### *The Final Four from Bowling Green*

Jackson, Carlton. *Picking Up the Tab: The Life and Movies of Martin Ritt*. Jackson chronicles the life and works of Martin Ritt,

a Jew from New York who played football for the "Fighting Christians" of Elon College in North Carolina and went on to direct numerous films including "Hud," "Norma Rae," "The Great White Hope," "The Sound and the Fury," "The Long Hot Summer," and "The Spy Who Came in from the Cold." He never was awarded an Oscar, but he was blacklisted in the 1950s for his efforts.

Lowe, Stephen R. *The Kid on the Sandlot: Congress and Professional Sports, 1910-1992*. Lowe provides information on all of the hearings, investigations, and bills of the U.S. Congress having to do with professional sports.

Prover, Jorja. *No One Knows Their Names: Hollywood Screenwriters*. This is an ethnographic description of the job lives of Hollywood screenwriters.

Stuart, Roxana. *Stage Blood: Vampires of the 19th Century Stage*. Examining nineteenth century vampire plays in sequence, Stewart shows the hardening of the image over the century from early romanticism to later xenophobia.

## Culture News and Information

**Social Theory Policy and the Arts: Annual Conference:** The conference, to be held October 3-5, 1996, will be hosted this year by the Chair in Arts Management of l'École des Hautes Études Commerciales in Montreal. This is an international and interdisciplinary conference concerned with the arts, society, and politics. Papers are still welcome but anyone thinking of submitting should contact the conference coordinator, Mario Beaulac, immediately. Mario is also the source for information if you are considering attending the conference. He can be reached by e-mail at [louise.st-pierre@hec.ca](mailto:louise.st-pierre@hec.ca) or by fax at 514/340-6432.

**Volumes of Culture:** The first volume in the Culture Section's book series, published by Basil Blackwell, was *Sociology of Culture: Emerging Theoretical Perspectives*, edited by Diana Crane. It appeared in May 1994 and has turned into a major source of financial support for the section (bankrolling our fabulous parties, for instance, as well as more mundane things like the newsletter). An Italian translation is now in the works. The second volume, edited by Elizabeth Long, is almost finished.

**Sociology and Disability Studies:** Submissions (instructional materials of any kind) are being accepted for an ASA Teaching Resources Guide in this area. If you have any, contact Diane Taub as soon as possible (e-mail: [dtaub@siu.edu](mailto:dtaub@siu.edu)).

**Nature Read . . . :** The Animals and Society Series recently initiated by Temple University Press is interested in receiving book proposals and manuscripts that constitute social scientific discussion of some area of human interaction with nonhuman animals but might attract an audience outside as well as within academe. Among the topics of interest are groups and movements devoted to animal-related issues and animal symbolism in popular culture, art, myth, and folklore. Contact Clinton R. Sanders, Department of Sociology, University of Connecticut, Greater Hartford Campus, 85 Lawler Road, West Hartford, CT ([csanders@uconnvm.uconn.edu](mailto:csanders@uconnvm.uconn.edu)).

**Dissertation in Progress:** *Definitional Talk and the Construction of Chicago's Indie Rock World*. This research is an ethnography of Chicago's "indie" rock world with data gathered from forty-three in-depth interviews and two years of participant observation. The research shows how indie rockers construct their world through "definitional talk"—claims made by indie rockers about their world's aesthetic properties and structural boundaries. Matthew B. Smith-Lahrman; Northwestern University; 1810 Chicago Avenue; Evanston, IL 60208; 708/491-5415; [mbsmith@merle.acns.nwu.edu](mailto:mbsmith@merle.acns.nwu.edu).

Submit dissertation descriptions by April 1 for publication in the Spring issue. See the fall issue for guidelines.

### About the Section & Newsletter

*Culture* is the official newsletter for the Sociology of Culture Section of the American Sociological Association. The Section Chair is Ann Swidler, Berkeley ([swidler@uclink2.berkeley.edu](mailto:swidler@uclink2.berkeley.edu)); the Chair-Elect and Program Chair is Robert Wuthnow, Princeton ([wuthnow@pucc.bitnet](mailto:wuthnow@pucc.bitnet)). All articles and columns are copyrighted by their authors. *Culture* is indexed in *Sociological Abstracts*.

**Deadline for Spring 1996 issue:** April 1. Unsolicited contributions are welcome in all content categories (articles, announcements, section news, dissertation descriptions, comments on previous articles, letters to the editor). They should be sent to the editor by e-mail or on DOS disk (disks should be scanned for viruses and will not be returned). Preliminary inquiries prior to formal submission are welcome, and can be made by phone, fax, mail, or e-mail. Submission of material to *Culture* constitutes permission for abstracting and indexing of one's material. The editor reserves the right to edit all submissions. See "Books of Note" for information on getting books covered. Address all other inquiries to the editor:

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## Culture Online Debuts: A New Communications System

Did you get the inaugural mailing of *Culture Online* in late February? If not, the reason is that we don't have an e-mail address for you. The February mailing contained material that is repeated in this issue of the newsletter, but during the summer the e-mail system will provide otherwise unavailable information on events for the annual meetings in NYC—party time and location, final information on Culture sessions, meetings of the research networks, etc. *So make sure the editors of Culture Online have your address by sending them an e-mail note.* They are: Rita Melendez (rita.melendez@yale.edu) and William Holt (wgholt3@minerva.cis.yale.edu). Bill and Rita will be sending out *Culture Online* no more than three times a year, and this is the only use that will be made of your e-mail address. This is not a listserv; you will not be inundated with junk.

In addition to sending out *Culture Online*, Bill and Rita have created a World Wide Web home page for the section. As the ASA's web system develops, ours will be linked to it. Our own web site will eventually include sub-pages for each of the research networks and provide data that section members may need, such as addresses of section leaders, updated information on sessions and events for the ASA meetings, and deadlines for election nominations and submitting papers, books, or articles for awards. Check it out! The URL (what you type in the box at the top of your web browser, or after the Go command in Lynx) is <http://pantheon.cis.yale.edu/~rmelende/culture.online.html>; the ASA home page is found at <http://www.asanet.org>. □

## Section Prizes, Elections, and News

**Prizes:** The Section will award three prizes this summer: Best Book, Best Article, and Best Student Paper. The last carries a financial incentive: \$300 reimbursement for expenses attending the annual meeting.

For the book and article prizes, work published in 1993-1995 is eligible. For student papers, any unpublished work by a current student that has not previously been submitted for the same prize is eligible. You can submit your own work or nominate that of others. The committees will need five copies of the work and of a statement about its significance (book authors can usually get their publishers to provide free copies for this purpose).

Send material by May 1 to the award committee chairs: Best Book: Steve Brint, UC—Riverside (brint@email.ucr.edu, Riverside CA 92521-0419); Best Article: George Thomas, Arizona State (atgmt@asu.acad, Tempe AZ 85287-2101); Best Student

## Renew Your Membership Now!

If by any chance you haven't renewed your membership, please act now. You can use the form below.

I am already an ASA member. Enclosed is my check for Culture Section membership dues (\$10; \$5 student).

I want to renew my ASA membership and enroll in the Culture Section for 1996. Please send a renewal form.

I want to join the ASA and the Culture Section. Please send a membership form.

Mail to: American Sociological Association, Membership Services, 1722 N Street NW, Washington DC 20036-2981.

Paper: Anne Kane, Texas—Austin (aekane@jeeves.la.utexas.edu, Austin TX 78712-1088). Awards will be announced at the meetings in August (winners will be notified in advance).

**Elections:** We will be electing a new section chair, a secretary-treasurer, and several council positions this spring. If you would like to run, or have people to suggest, please contact the nominating committee chair, Penny Becker, Cornell (peb4@cornell.edu; Ithaca NY 14853), immediately. Your input is the best way to get more than the usual suspects running.

**Fame and Glory for Section Members:** Francie Ostrower managed to get an op-ed about philanthropists and the perils of relying on them instead of government programs into the *New York Times* on January 12. Exactly one month later, a feature story appeared, starting on the front page and occupying an entire page inside, largely based on Pete Peterson, Judith Balfe, and Darren Sherkat's work on arts audiences. □

## Network News: Theory, Gender, & History

The *Theory and Culture Network* is the place for musings and exchanges about cultural theory. Almost forty people have joined us to stay in touch with others inclined to mesh their work on culture with broader theoretical issues. Currently we are sponsoring a panel at the Eastern Sociological Society meetings in Boston on "Rethinking Social Differentiation." Nancy Weiss Hanrahan, Michelle Ollivier, and Ron Jacobs have some interesting new work to present dealing with the impact of cultural sociology on this fundamental issue in classical and contemporary social theory. (Look for more on their work in future network mailings.) Network e-mail discussion continues to provide a channel for syllabi exchange and the lines remain open for less structured reflections and discussion.

To join contact Lyn Spillman, Sociology, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame IN 46556, 219/631-8067 (Spillman.1@nd.edu) or Anne Kane, Sociology, University of Texas at Austin, 336 Burdine Hall, Austin TX 78712, 512/471-1122 (aekane@jeeves.la.utexas.edu).

The *Culture and Gender Network* is off to a great start with 30 members and a wealth of diverse approaches. A listserv has been created and we have been using the network primarily as a resource that allows us to call on one another for ideas and inspiration in research and teaching. We have discussed the possibility of an e-mail conference and we plan to meet again at the next ASA to share syllabi and to begin developing a map of the field, outlining the central themes in scholarship on gender and culture. If you would like to join the network, receive a copy of the membership directory, share syllabi, or participate in an e-mail conference, please contact Sharon Hays (sh2q@virginia.edu).

The *Culture and History Research Network* is planning on holding a two-hour workshop on "The Role of Culture in Historical Explanation" at this year's American Sociological Association meetings in New York City. We are also in the process of organizing several panels in conjunction with the Social Science History Association meetings in New Orleans, Oct. 10-13, 1996. If you have an interest in participating in either of these events or would like to have your name added to our mailing list, please contact John Mohr, Department of Sociology, University of California, Santa Barbara CA 93106-9430 (mohr@sscf.ucsb.edu) or Ewa Morawska, Sociology Dept, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia PA 19104 (emorawsk@mail.sas.upenn.edu). □