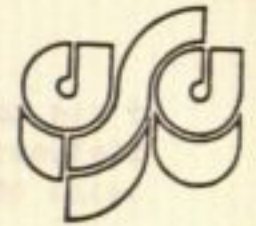


# CULTURE

## SECTION OF THE AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION



Fall 1987

Vol 2 No 1

### KEEPING UP WITH OUR GROWING SECTION

by Richard A. Peterson

WONDERFUL is the word for the very well attended Section Sessions organized for the Chicago ASA meetings by Vera Zolberg. Many thanks to Vera and all the participants for their diverse quality presentations. The Center for the Study of Industrial Societies hosted a bang-up section party. In Atlanta we better have the party at the hotel so even more members can attend.

**ELECTION RESULTS** Winners of the section elections for the 1987-88 year were announced at the Section Business meeting. They are: yours truly, Chair; Vera Zolberg, Chair Elect; Judith Balfe, Secretary-Treasurer; and for Council: Stanley Aronowitz, Muriel Cantor, Diana Crane, Todd Gitlin, Michael Schudson, and Gaye Tuchman. Liah Greenfeld has agreed to serve as Newsletter Editor.

**NEWSLETTER** As announced at the business meeting, Greenfeld and Peterson, with your help, plan to add a new feature to the Newsletter. Each issue will include one or more statements about the sociology of culture, a special substantive topic relating the culture domain, or a methodological consideration. Please contribute. Aim at 500 words, and send copies to both Greenfeld and Peterson. We may consult with the editorial board and with other knowledgeable section members in making editorial decisions. Please feel free to call or write concerning what you have in mind.

**SELF-STUDY** Who are we culturalists? What are our interests? A number of people have mentioned that it would be a great idea to have a Section membership list that includes the substantive interests of all members. Such a list could be vital for networking and also to be sure the section is serving the interests of all its members. The basic idea is to circulate a one-sheet form (in an issue of the Newsletter) on which individuals can check their interests on a mark-sense sheet and then to merge the resulting information with the list of members kept by the ASA. All the people at the business meeting were asked to list their areas of interest so that it would be possible to establish the coding categories. From looking at these, it is clear that a large number of categories of several different sorts will be needed. That's fine. Clearly the culture section is no narrow special interest cult. At this writing, however, I am not sure how to code the information in a way which is maximally informative yet easy and cheap to do. I would greatly appreciate a volunteer facile on the computer that can help work on this important section-building project. Help!!!

**CREATING JOBS WITH TEACHING MATERIAL** Perhaps the most important thing the section can do in finding jobs for its members is to help create positions for culturalists. The prime way of creating positions in these enrollment-hungry times is to create intellectually respectable new courses that regularly draw a goodly number of students. Perhaps you have wanted to offer a new course in culture or art or the mass media or science or music or television or dance but don't know just what material to use.

Perhaps you have such material to contribute. Rosanne Martorella is the Chair of our committee which is collecting and organizing material on a number of culture-related courses. Now is the season when you have just created or revised your reading lists for the Fall. Please send course material to her for her committee's consideration. The job you create may become your own.

1987-88  
CULTURE SECTION

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Gaye Tuchman

#### NOMINATIONS

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Jeffrey Goldfarb  
Joseph Katerbo  
Elizabeth Long

#### TEACHING

##### MATERIALS

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RENEW RENEW your membership get a colleague and student to JOIN JOIN  
RENEW we have 383 members, SO close to 400 which gets us three sessions JOIN

CULTURE 1

Note: We plan to feature contributions from members in every issue. The focus may be conceptual, methodological, bibliographic, etc. The following statements by Greenfeld and Gaines are not Section partyline but first shots in an ongoing exchange. Do enter the fray; make your volley brief and well aimed.

### Sociology of Culture: Perspective not Specialty Liah Greenfeld

What is sociology of culture? Culture itself, generally speaking, is symbolic reality. Yet we, cultural sociologists, certainly cannot claim symbolic reality as the subject-matter specific to our studies. Symbolic phenomena so central to all sociology such as values and norms, are legitimate objects of research in the sociologies of the family, education, professions, deviance - to mention just a few areas. Even the sociology of symbolic reality is cut up. Religion has long been a separate specialty, and sociologists of science and knowledge (the latter traditionally including ideology, philosophy, literature, common sense) are trying at present to form their own section. As our specific subject-matter we can claim, perhaps, only art. Is sociology of culture, then, but a residual sub-discipline, focused on left-overs of other sociologies?

This is not the most useful way to look at it. If we agree that culture is symbolic reality, we may arrive at a totally different view of the sociology of culture by going back to the first pages of Weber's *ECONOMY AND SOCIETY*, the chapter on the basic sociological terms. The core of this chapter is the discussion of the four types of social action, what Weber considers the proper subject of sociology. "Social" action is defined as action meaningfully oriented towards others, thus action of a self-conscious actor, based on explicit symbolic representation of the components of action and situation.

Weber identifies four types of social action distinguished from each other by the specificity of their cultural component, or by the nature of symbols that make each of them meaningfully oriented. Traditionally oriented action is action based upon the knowledge of customs and norms; action oriented in an instrumentally rational way is action based upon the knowledge of practical goals and the means available for their achievement; value-rational action is oriented by values ("good", "sacred", etc.) and the knowledge of appropriate ways of living up to them; and affectively oriented action is based upon the interpretation - in the available idiom - of one's own feelings and the knowledge of the socially sanctioned ways of expressing them.

The four types of social action are ideal types; social action, according to Weber, is only rarely found in its pure form. Human behavior is at least as much biological as it is social, and other types of action are as ubiquitous in society as are the four types of action which are meaningfully oriented. But action which is not based on the symbolic representation of the action situation, however ubiquitous, is not considered "social" by Weber.

Social reality, therefore, is seen by Weber as cultural reality: what is specifically social about human action is symbolic. Accordingly, sociology proper - the science of human society - is all sociology of culture. In this Weberian perspective, sociology of culture is not a subdiscipline but rather a paradigm in sociology that can fruitfully be used in all of the specialty areas of the discipline. It is relevant not just in the sociology of science, art, religion, and law, but in understanding fertility behavior, economic activity, and voting behavior, etc. It follows that the Culture Section of the ASA should be relevant to and welcome demographers and analysts of the market economy as much as the sociologists of dance and the New York art scene.

Beyond Participant Observation: Cultural Sociologist as Method Actor  
Donna Gaines

Verstehen? In helping sociologists grasp the motivations of social actors within particular socio-historic conditions, Max Weber's method is useful. Much like the lawyer or detective who recreates the crime to get at the motive and pin the suspect to the crime, the Verstehende sociologist remains detached.

On the other hand, the cultural sociologist as method actor is engaged and consciously uses the self. This researcher is implicated. Critical distance is purposefully lost, regained and regrouped like dramatic actors who study for parts. A dramatic actor may live among alcoholics, attend A.A. meetings, go on drinking binges, if the character to be played is alcoholic. The dramatic actor "becomes" the character, immersed in the character's cultural milieu.

Similarly in the field, the cultural sociologist "walks the walk", "talks the talk" and then some. Participant-observers and ethnographers have always done this, and have fretted over "going native." For all our rigor we can never be the detached, disembodied voyeurs we'd like to be. We are forever implicated in the dirty, smelly, chaotic social world. And that is good, because cultural sociology is about getting people where they breathe.

Recently, I was researching a story about street car racers. I like cars but knew very little about them -- computers are the commodities I fetish. I began talking to my friends who are car buffs. Then I spent a lot of time hanging around car shows, cruise spots and garages. I interviewed more car freaks. But the geist, or spirit of the car racer just wasn't in me. It still felt alien -- a predominantly male sphere that I could not permeate. What makes these people adore cars? What compels a teenage boy to spend 8-10 hours a week fussing with his engine? A few aim to show their cars, or to race them professionally. There's big prize money in that. But most guys seem to do it for love. "The car is my pride and joy. It's part of me," they croon. I asked their girlfriends who were also at a loss to explain the big attraction. I read all the car magazines. I had all the facts but I still couldn't "get it."

So I thought about my own car. I started to polish it obsessively. I dressed it up with velvet dice, black synthetic fur trim around the rear view mirror and the steering wheel. Perhaps I'd go for a special blue glaze to make the body look psychedelic in the sunlight? Bear in mind -- this is no mint 50's classic, no '60's muscle car, or '87 Grand National. I own a 1986 Honda Accord. Abject, a "yuppie car" in racer subcultures.

But it was my car so I forced myself to spend 8-10 hours a week tooling the engine, waxing, and grooming the car. Then I started racing it on the great turnpikes of suburbia. One night I was revving the engine, tempting a 1970 Mercury Montego to race. My car looked so cool, and I felt so proud, so powerful. I knew I could beat this sucker in a flash. I felt the adrenalin, and in that moment I understood all about cars.

Now that I had the feeling, the facts had meaning. Although my enthusiasm did subside as I moved on to the next inquiry, I was left with an immediate sense of how car freaks feel about their wheels. Method acting has helped me to illuminate the ways in which meaning is produced in a number of cultural settings -- home viewing of pornography, animal rights, terrorism.

Like the method actor who selects among the parts of the play, the cultural sociologist is free to Verstehen what ever is deemed and value relevant.

The Thought Factory / One Madison Lane  
Carle Place, New York, 11514

NEW BOOKS OF NOTE

The first thirteen books are all taken from the current New Sociology book list of the University of California Press!!! How right the person who said the sociology of culture is a growth industry. Not simply numerous, the new works are diverse and high quality as well. The first is by and about the Frankfurt school man whose American research articles in the 1950s showed that an historically sensitive empirical sociology of culture was possible. Many thanks Leo. R.A.P.

Leo Lowenthal. An Unmastered Past: The Autobiographical Reflections of Leo Lowenthal. Edited by Martin Jay.

Michael P. Rogin. Ronald Reagan, The Movies: And Other Episodes in Political Demonology. The very American fear of subversion is seen to be fueled by the needs of the counter-subversives.

Donald Lazere, ed. American Media and Mass Culture: Left Perspectives. This is a collection of essays by nearly 40 Marxists, feminists, and leftist critics of (American) mass culture.

Roger D. McGrath. Gunfighters, Highwaymen, and Vigilantes: Violence on the Frontier. Violence in modern America is rooted less in the conquest of the frontier than in the formation of the modern city.

Jeffrey C. Alexander, Bernhard Giesen, Richard Munch, and Neil Smelser eds. The Micro-Macro Link. Useful to culturalists in at least two ways: first, the obvious point in the essays, the link is often culture; second, this work may provide the basis for thinking about the links between macro-and micro-culture.

Martin Wuthnow. Meaning and Moral Order: Explorations in Cultural Analysis. Unsatisfied with measures on individual values, Wuthnow details three alternative ways of constructing moral order.

Charles C. Ragin. The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies. Coming from the quant side, Ragin proposes Boolean algebra-based methods for reconciling variable-based measures with case-based descriptions.

Eunice Lipton. Looking into Degas: Uneasy Images of Women and Modern Life. Lipton reads Degas' paintings as a critique of Parisian highlife.

Elizabeth Wilson. Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity. Dress is a performance art in urban society that beyond signalling conventions of gender and class, voices dissent and deviance as well.

Catherine Gallagher and Thomas Laqueur, eds. The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century. That says it.

Caroline Walker Bynum. Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women. Sainthood comes to women through extraordinary manipulations of the Christian eucharist. Judy Chicago, you are on to something!!!

Priscilla Parkhurst Clark. Literary France: The Making of a Culture. Clark unblinkingly looks into the mirror to see in which ways literature reflects French society.

Thomas R. Trautmann. Lewis Henry Morgan and the Invention of Kinship. Morgan's work influenced not only Spencer and Marx, but everyday Victorians' views of themselves as well.

That's the GOOD news from California. The BAD news is that only four of these thirteen works on the Sociology list have sociologist author/editors.

NEW BOOKS OF NOTE

Diana Crane. The Transformation of the Avant-Garde: The New York Art World, 1940-1985. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Crane vividly documents the succession of seven art styles that have emerged since 1940, showing the flowering and foundering of New York as the center of the fine art world and portrays what may be the conversion of art into advertising.

Steven C. Dubin. Bureaucratizing the Muse: Public Funds and the Cultural Worker. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Dubin documents the Chicago CETA Artists-in-Residence program that between 1977 and 1981 supported artists in a wide range of fields, and compares CETA with the WPA arts projects of the 1930s.

Gary Schwartz. Beyond Conformity or Rebellion. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. With the lens of school-community culture, Schwartz compares the patterns of conformity and deviance of youth in six widely contrasting Illinois high schools.

Rebecca Zurier. Art for THE MASSES: A Radical Magazine and its Graphics, 1911-1917. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. The book graphically shows that the enduring impact of THE MASSES was as much visual as intellectual.

Henry A. Kingsbury. Music, Talent, and Performance. Stunningly insightful, Kingsbury brings the tools of anthropological ethnography to bear in illuminating the rituals of an American conservatory of music, the cult of talent, etc.

Igor Aleksander with Piers Burnett. Thinking Machines: The Search for Artificial Intelligence. New York: Knopf. The authors show that artificial intelligence programs make it possible for computers to learn much more than could be programmed into them.

Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz. Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present. New York: Random House. Horowitz traces the continuity of particular campus cultures over many generations of students.

Stephen Bayley. Sex, Drink, and Fast Cars. New York: Pantheon. Bayley explores the meaning given to cars and how these are made use of by designers, advertisers, and marketers.

Todd Gitlin, ed. Watching Television. New York: Pantheon. Seven essays by media critics explore the politics and social implications of television.

Karl Manoff and Michael Schudson, eds. Reading the News. New York: Pantheon. Six essays analyze the newspaper as a mirror and shaper of world views.

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Five new books from the Bowling Green State University Popular Press

Richard Chalfen. Kodak Culture and Polaroid People: Toward a Visual Anthropology of Amateur Photography.

Jim Curtis. Rock Eras: Interpretations of Music and Society, 1954-1984.

William Darby. Necessary Fictions: Popular Literature of the Fifties. Bestselling fiction sanctifies pre-existing values.

Gary Hoppenstand. In Search of the Paper Tiger: A Sociological Perspective of Myth, Formula and the Mystery Genre in the Entertainment Print Mass Medium. No contest, clearly the worst title of the year.

Frederick Kreuziger. The Religion of Science Fiction. A contribution to the analysis of secular religion.

CULTURE SECTION-in-FORMATION BUSINESS MEETING  
ASA Annual Meetings

9:05 a.m.

August 19, 1987

Palmer House, Chicago

1. Richard Peterson Section-in-Formation Chair, called to order the Culture Section-in-Formation Business Meeting. He saluted Donna Gaines for taking the initiative in getting culture recognized as an ASA section. He noted that well over the minimum of 200 had joined so the ASA was prepared to grant full section status once we have elected officers and a set of By-laws.
2. Judith Balfe, Chair of the By-Laws Committee, led a discussion of the proposed Culture Section By-Laws. They had been printed in the most recent newsletter and copies were distributed to everyone at the business meeting. Gary Alan Fine said that the Publication committee should serve as an independent review board so the Editor of the Newsletter should not serve as its Chair. Fine proposed an amendment that the Chair of the Publications Committee be appointed by the Chairperson of the Section, but not also serve as Newsletter Editor. Rather, the Editor would and serve ex-officio on the Publications Committee. The amendment was passed unanimously, as then were the amended By-Laws.
3. Jeffrey Goldfarb, Chair of the Nominating Committee, announced the winners of section elections as follows: Richard A. Peterson, Chair; Vera Zolberg, Chair Elect; Secretary-Treasurer, Judith Balfe (3 years); Council Members, Muriel Cantor & Diana Crane (3 years), Stanley Aronowitz & Michael Schudson (2 years), Todd Gitlin & Gaye Tuchman (1 year).
4. Peterson thanked Robin Anderson, James Benton, Barbara Berry, William DiFazio, Donna Gaines, David Hummon, Ann Swidler, and John Ryan for their service to the Section-in-Formation committees and especially congratulated Judith Balfe and Jeffrey Goldfarb for so ably chairing the two committees. Vera Zolberg deserves the gratitude of all for organizing the two excellent Section sessions. With that, the Section-in-Formation was declared dissolved bringing the Culture Section into existence.

CULTURE SECTION BUSINESS MEETING  
ASA Annual Meetings

9:25 a.m.

August 19, 1987

Palmer House, Chicago

Richard Peterson, Chair, called to order the Culture Section Business Meeting.

1. Course Material Project Report: In the absence of Chair Rosanne Martorella, Peterson asked Section members to contribute syllabi and other course materials to establish a Section file for use in curriculum development by anyone interested. (Martorella's address is listed on page 1.)
2. Reading List Project Report: Peterson noted that few of these have been submitted, and asked that members do so, to the same purpose as the Course Material Project.
3. Newsletter Editor: Liah Greenfeld was introduced as Editor for 1987-88. Please send all submissions for the Newsletter to her at the address listed on page 1.
4. Nominations Committee: Volunteers were solicited to make nominations for the election to be held in Spring 1988. Those agreeing to serve were: Jeffrey Goldfarb, John Hall, Joseph Katerbo, and Elizabeth Long. Hall agreed to Chair the committee. Please send suggestions to him (at the address listed on page 1) for Chair-Elect and two Council seats.
5. Report on the Section Council Meeting:
  - a. Dues: The Council's decision on the structure of Section dues was announced and asked to be ratified. Agreement was unanimous. Hereafter, Section dues shall be \$7 for regular ASA members; \$5 for reduced-rate ASA members (students, emeriti).
  - b. Self-Survey: In anticipation of the survey to be included in the Newsletter, members were asked to submit categories or key words describing their own interests.
  - c. Newsletter Content: Members were asked to submit brief essays on various sub-fields, with select bibliographies. Ann Swidler asked for the retention of the broadest possible definition of culture, including religion and science, to include any and all "manipulations of the symbolic world" within the purview of the Section. There was general agreement.
6. Other Business:
  - a. Robert Weber asked about the relation between Culture Section Sessions at the Annual Meetings and Regular Sessions on culture set up by the ASA (to be organized for 1988 by William Gibson). In the ensuing discussion, several points were clarified by Elizabeth Long: ASA session and their organizers are decided by the ASA Program Committee and the ASA President-Elect. Section sessions are decided by the appropriate Section officers. Individuals can propose to organize particular sessions, as well, and for the 1989 Annual Meeting should send such proposals, and their rationale as soon as possible to Janet Asner of the ASA and Joan Huber, 1989 President-Elect.  
Culture Section Sessions for 1988 will be organized by Vera Zolberg, Section Chair-Elect, who will appoint at least two members to her committee and will delegate to them the authority of establishing the thematic content of the sessions, as well as organizing roundtables.  
General discussion about roundtables focused on the fact that they all run simultaneously. Alternative scheduling would allow people to attend more than one. Brian Sherman agreed to help set up a listing of members' rooms at the 1988 Atlanta ASA meetings, to serve as alternate sites for the roundtables. Elizabeth Long suggested arranging with another Section -- perhaps the Emotions Section -- to split allotted time slots for the official "roundtable room" so that each Section would have half of the tables in the time slot, and thus be able to have two consecutive sets of roundtables.
  - b. Announcements of upcoming meetings were made:  
Jeffrey Halley announced that the Annual Conference on Social Theory, Politics and the Arts will be held Oct. 30 - Nov.1, but relocated from SUNY-Purchase to SUNY-Albany.  
Arnold Foster announced the Annual Meeting of the ASA Research Council #37 on the Sociology of the Arts to be held Oct. 26-28 at SUNY-Albany.  
Stanley Aronowitz announced a research roundtable on Post-Modernism to be held at CUNY Graduate Center in November.  
Rick Robinson announced a conference on the Psychology of Art to be held at Clark University in the Fall.
  - c. Richard Peterson, Culture Section Chair, appealed to members to solicit a few more members to joint to bring the total membership, presently 373, up to 400.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Balfe, Secretary-Treasurer

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ASA Program: 1988 Meetings, Atlanta, Georgia  
Vera Zolberg, Chair Elect

Consistent with my desire to foster participation by section members, in organizing the program for 1988, I have taken into account the excellent ideas that many of you have sent me, and I am "de-centralizing" the organization of the sessions and the roundtables by asking some of you to take responsibility for receiving and reviewing papers and roundtable topics, according to your interest, though I will be happy to advise.

Culture Section Themes: Formal Paper Sessions

a. Title: The Old Masters and the Sociology of Culture: Robert Alford  
What do Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Simmel offer for studying contemporary problems in cultural sociology? The possibilities for papers are legion. For example, does the concept of "bourgeois culture" still help to discriminate between different cultural phenomena? Does Simmel's concept of "collective individuality" in the arts point to a significant phenomenon? How much charisma do audiences confer upon spectacular performers? Under what conditions do the "super-structural" elements of culture shape economic and political activity? What does Weber's notion of autonomous institutions imply for the notion of autonomous culture, and what are its political implications? ---or, Do more recent "masters" offer better points of departure for the sociology of culture?  
Session organizer: Robert Alford, Dept. of Sociology, NYU, 269 Mercer St. NYC 10003 until Jan. 1; thereafter, UC-Santa Cruz, Merrill College, Santa Cruz, CA 95064.

b. Title: Alternative Approaches and Methods in Cultural Sociology: Ann Swidler  
Taking a broad view of culture, including religion, science, sport, the arts, without regard to elite/popular restrictions, section members are invited to submit papers exemplifying unusual approaches applied to particular cases.  
Session organizer: Ann Swidler, U.C.-Berkeley, Dept. of Sociology, Berkeley, CA 94720.

Roundtables

Each organizer listed below undertakes responsibility for accepting proposals for two informal roundtables, which will run for one hour nibbled out of our business meeting time, as we were obliged to do last year. Surprisingly, they worked out very well, even in the limited time format. For subjects other than the ones listed, please contact me.

1. Political Discourse and the Political Subject

Organizer: Robin Wagner-Pacifici, Swarthmore College, Dept. of Soc. and Anth. Swarthmore, PA 19081.

2. Cross-cultural Transfers and Transformations: Popular Literature, Sports, Science or Religion and their Reconstruction in Third World Contexts

Wendy Griswold, Univ. of Chicago, Dept. of Soc. Chicago, IL 60637

3. Subcultures: Regional, Ethnic, Class and Other

Michele Lamont, Princeton Univ., Dept. of Soc. 2-N-2 Green Hall, Princeton, NJ 08544

4. Autonomous Culture in Modern Society

Theory and practice of institutional and cultural autonomy in diverse historical and political contexts.

Liah Greenfeld, Harvard Univ. Wm. James Hall, Dept. of Soc. Cambridge, MA

5. Social Significance of Cultural Form: Art, Medicine, Religion Science

What do aspects of form contribute to content, if anything? What do "elegance," "parsimony," and other such terms mean in cultural practice, including with respect to "classification" processes?

Judith Balfe, College of Staten Island, 715 Ocean Terrace, Staten Is., NY 10301

Submit NOW, Deadlines Approach