

# Culture

Section of the American Sociological Association

## A Message from the Chair

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### Performance and Counter-Power (1): The Civil Rights Movement and the Civil Sphere<sup>1</sup>

Sociologists have written much about the social forces that create conflict and polarize society, about the fragmenting structures and compelling powers of political, economic, racial, ethnic, religious, and gender groups. But they have said very little about the construction, destruction, and reconstruction of civic solidarity itself. They are generally silent about the sphere of "fellow feeling" — brotherly, sisterly and human feeling — that makes society into society and about the processes that fragment it.

I would like to approach this sphere of fellow feeling from the perspective of "civil society." The concept of civil society has, of course been a topic of enormous discussion and dispute throughout the history of social thought and is also hotly disputed today. I will approach civil society as a sphere, one that articulates solidarity in a universalistic way. This sphere, or subsystem, is a social world of distinct proportions that is analytically and, to various degrees, empirically separated from political, economic, religious, and family life, and from such communal associations as ethnic groups.

To the degree that such a universal moral community achieves some substantial sociological weight, it indirectly exercises material power via such distinctively regulative institutions as constitutions and legal codes, on the one hand, and the institution of "office" and the franchise, on the other. I call these institutions "regulative" for they have the power to control, even to coerce, non-civil institutions in the name of the universalizing criteria of civil society itself. As I see it, however, the civil sphere must also be understood as encompassing institutions of a less regulative kind, particularly what I would call the factual and fictional media of mass communication.

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## Editor's Note

Please let me know your ideas for submissions!

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## Rethinking the Culture Wars Concept

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### From Opinion Polarization to Policy Conflict, Institutional Divides, and Media Attention

One of the most interesting sessions that I attended at the ASA meetings in Philadelphia occurred on the very last day: a thematic session called "Sociology in the Culture Wars: From Public Issues to Personal Problems and Back Again." The speakers—Cynthia Fuchs Epstein, Frank Furstenberg, Kathleen Gerson, and Michael Kimmel—discussed recent political debates about issues such as the family, abortion, and claims about biological differences in the workplace. The focus of discussion was on how sociologists can participate as actors in these culture wars, with valuable contributions of their own. Two conclusions were put forth. The first, coming from most of the panelists and several members of the audience, was that progressives need to make better use of the media. Cynthia Fuchs Epstein seemed skeptical about the value of this suggestion, and emphasized instead the need for a feminist return to radical policy solutions.

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## Announcing the ESA Research Network for the Sociology of Culture

The Sociology of Culture network was founded in 2005 under the auspices of the European Sociological Association thanks to the efforts of Rudi Laermans, Anna Lisa Tota, Tia De Nora, Thomas Eberle and other founding members who wished to promote scholarly exchange and creative collaboration between European-based sociologists of culture and non-European sociologists with an interest in specific aspects of "culture(s) in Europe." The first meeting of the Network was held at the 7<sup>th</sup> ESA-conference in Torun (Poland) in September 2005. The network will organize sessions and meetings at regular ESA conferences; in-between the latter, an interim conference will be the rule (the first one is scheduled for November 15-17, 2006, and will take place in Flanders, Belgium).

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**Books of Note.....p. 8**

Even when such organizations are so broadly defined, however, the civil sphere should not be considered in only institutional terms. It is also a realm of structured, socially established consciousness, a semiotic network of understandings that operate beneath and above organizational and elite interests. To study this subjective dimension of civil society, we must recognize that some symbolic codes are critically important in constituting the very sense of a morally regulated society for those who are within and without it. The codes supply structured categories of civil purity and uncivil impurity into which every member, or potential member, of civil society is made to fit.

Members of national communities firmly believe that “the world,” and this notably includes their own nation, is filled with people who either do not deserve freedom and communal support or are not capable of sustaining them. Such deservingly excluded persons are held to be “moral egoists,” because they are dishonest, because they are secretive, irrational, emotional, factional, aggressive, or incapable of being autonomous and independent.

Since their first institutionalizations in the seventeenth century, the universalistic promises made by the civil spheres of even formally democratic nation-states have been mocked by gross exclusions and inequalities. With the help of the bifurcating discourse of civil society, these “destructive intrusions” have entered into the very construction of the civil spheres, distorting its norms, institutions, and interactions. Yet, insofar as the universalizing ideals of the civil sphere have retained some independence and force, and they often have, there has always remained the possibility, in principle, for “civic repair.”

In this two-part essay, I wish to suggest that the social movement against racial oppression that unfolded in America during the 1950s and 1960s should be regarded, among other things, as just such a movement of civil repair. In causal terms, this suggests that the successes and failures of the civil rights movement cannot be productively understood without reference to the bifurcating discourses and the regulative and communicative institutions of the civil sphere.

One way of thinking about the contradictory qualities of civil society is via the concept of “duality.” In social systems that include a partially independent civil sphere, every actor might be said to occupy a dual position. He or she is a subordinate or superordinate actor in a whole series of vertical hierarchies and, at the same time, a member of the putatively horizontal community of civil life. Even for a dominated and marginalized minority, duality allows the possibility, in principle, of struggles for empowerment and incorporation. One metaphorical way of putting this is to say the vertical relationships of the non-civil spheres — economic, political, religious, familial, ethnic, and scientific — are challenged by membership in a horizontal, civil “environment” that in principle surrounds them.

The existence of duality is missed by social movement theories that focus exclusively on resistance to domination and the accumulation of scarce resources. It is not only the system of resource allocation that is crucial for stimulating social movements, but the system of normative integration, however that may be defined. If this integrative environment is at least partly a civil one, conflicts against domination become

more than simply “wars of position” whose outcomes depend on which side accumulates more power and more effectively threatens, and sometimes exercises, coercion and force.

Duality means that social movements also involve demands for recognition and for the expansion of civil solidarity that recognition implies. Achieving power remains vital, but it can only be gained by civil means. Organizations and resources remain crucial for social movements, but what they provide, in the first instance, is access to the “means of persuasion.” In a social system that contains a substantial civil sphere, it is communicative institutions that provide leverage for affecting regulative institutions — the legal codes, the office obligations, and the electoral outcomes that effectively control the allocation of the state’s money and force.

How do these theoretical considerations apply to the American civil rights movement? It goes without saying that there was little civil mediation in the vertical relationship between black subjects and white dominators in the American South. Because there was no civil mediation, blacks often felt compelled to try to seize power directly, through revolts and other kinds of violent confrontations. When they did so, their efforts were invariably put down with overwhelming force.

As the notion of duality suggests, however, even in the Southern states the vertical relationship of racial domination was surrounded by implicit, not yet articulated constraints that emanated from the horizontal civil sphere of the North. It was this duality — not the accumulation of instrumental power and the exercise of direct confrontation — that promised the possibility of justice for dominated Southern blacks. The challenge was how could this duality be activated? The challenge was to find a way to reach over the anti-civil domination of white southerners to the other, more civil side in the North.

Contemporary American historians and sociologists have tended to portray the civil rights movement as a power struggle between blacks and whites, emphasizing grass roots organizing and direct, face-to-face confrontations between organized masses of African-Americans and their immediate oppressors on the local scene. As I see it, however, the civil rights movement must be understood in a different way. It aimed, first and foremost, at persuasion. Its goal was to achieve a more influential and hence more dominant position in the “national” civil sphere of the North. Only after achieving such civil influence could movement leaders, and the masses they were energized by, trigger regulatory intervention and accumulate power in the more traditional sense.

There were many so-called structural factors that made such communicative mobilization possible, and these have been the focus of various empirical studies. Theorists and empirical social scientists alike have identified such factors inside the black community as industrialization and urbanization; increasing secondary and higher education; the independence, wealth, and power of the black church; and the significance of black newspapers. What facilitated the emergence of the black counter-public in more contingent, historically specific terms was, of course, the massive African-American participation in World War II, which heightened expectations for full empowerment.

The force of structural factors outside the black community have also been frequently noted, most often the increasingly responsive legal order of the surrounding Northern civil

sphere. This new legalism was itself stimulated, in no small part, by the growth of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which constituted a kind of “shadow” regulatory institution vis-à-vis white civil society. It was, of course, the NAACP that initiated the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* decision that made school desegregation illegal in 1954. To all these well-known structural factors, I would add the emergence of Northern news journalism as an independent profession with its own universalizing and increasingly idealistic ethics. Once Northern white news reporters entered the South to cover the nascent civil rights movement, they functioned as the eyes and ears of the Northern civil sphere. Without this organizational feature, there would have been no success for the black movement for civil rights.

Such structural-institutional factors – resources and capacities — did, indeed, make possible the emergence of the black movement for civil rights. But what was also crucially important — and what has remained virtually unstudied — was the process of communicative mobilization itself, the cultural-symbolic process that these structural factors facilitated but did not determine in a causal sense. By communicative mobilization, I refer to the ability of movement leaders to frame and reframe their complaints, their selves, and their groups in a manner that allowed their demands to leapfrog Southern officials and Southern media and to gain the serious, eventually, rapt attention of less racist whites in the Northern civil sphere.

From this perspective, the black leaders of the Southern movement, the “movement intellectuals” in Eyerman and Jameson’s apt term, can be understood as enormously skillful mobilizers of communication. In effect, they functioned as “translators,” reweaving the particular concerns of the black community by stitching them together with the tactics of Gandhian nonviolence, Christian narratives of sacrifice, and the democratic codes of the American civil sphere. What I am suggesting, in other words, is that in order to establish a relationship with the surrounding civil sphere, the black movement was compelled to engage not only in instrumental but in symbolic action. It aimed not only at accumulating and leveraging structural power but at creating performative power, which depending on a producing compelling, arresting, and existentially and politically encompassing narrative. Their challenge was to create a “social drama” with which the Northern audience could identify and through which it could vicariously participate in the struggle against racial injustice in the South. In the late 1970s, James Bevel, one of the movement’s most effective non-violent leaders, retrospectively explained movement “action” in precisely these terms. “Every nonviolent movement is a dialogue between two forces,” Bevel said, “and you have to develop a drama, [you have] to **dramatize** the dialogue to reveal the contradictions in the guys you’re dialoguing with.”

This dramaturgic element provides the elusive key to understanding how duality was triggered during those years of heightened mobilization and structural reform. How could white Northern civil society be there, in the South, yet not be there at the same time? When its physical presence was barely tangible, how could its moral presence eventually become so strongly felt? How could the North’s representative officials be compelled to intervene in a society towards which they had earlier evinced so little interest and against which they had so often claimed to exercise so little control?

Duality was activated only because the Southern black movement created a successful social drama. Only such a symbolic vehicle could break through the structural constraints on the local scene. The symbolic power of the civil rights drama facilitated emotional and moral identification between Northern whites and Southern blacks. Eventually, these intertwined processes of emotional identification and symbolic extension created an historically unprecedented widening of civil solidarity, one that extended for the first time significantly beyond the color line. Insofar as solidarity expanded, Northern whites reacted with indignation and anger to the violation of black civil rights, especially to the anti-civil violence that white Southern officials often unleashed against the nonviolent protest activities of Southern blacks. This white outrage eventually affected Northern officials, who felt compelled finally to begin to repair the destructive intrusion of race into the Southern civil sphere, and eventually, and with much more ambivalence, in the Northern civil sphere as well.

Only through the concepts and methods of cultural sociology can we observe, and begin provisionally to explain, power processes of this kind. I am not suggesting that other approaches to power should be abandoned, but I do believe that conventional understandings of power as consisting of resources and capacities must be modified in a fundamental way. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle explained that drama compels identification and catharsis. Tragic drama, he wrote, excites in the audience pity and terror, and sympathy for the protagonists’ plight. The progression of protagonist and antagonist eventually allows catharsis, the emotional working through that affirms not only the existence but the force of higher moral law. Of course, the civil rights movement was not scripted; it was a social movement, not a text. Nonetheless, the contingent, open-ended nature of its conflicts were symbolically mediated and textually informed. Life imitates art. In the dramas created by the civil rights movement, the black civil innocents, who were weak, were pitted against the white anti-civil antagonists, who were strong. The forces of civil good unexpectedly but persistently emerged triumphant. If such an outcome made the process ultimately more melodramatic than tragic, melodrama shares with tragedy an emphasis on suffering and the excitation of pity and terror.

Civil rights leaders became heroes only because they first were victims; they gained repeated triumphs only after repeated experiences of tragedy. As the movement gained experience, its organizers learned how to dramatically display their victim position more effectively. What they knew from the very beginning, however, was that Southern black protestors could redeem their suffering only if they maintained their civil dignity in the midst of defeat, if they refrained from anti-civil violence aggression, dishonesty, and deception. The protestors had to be viewed by the Northern audience as keeping faith with civil good in the face of anti-civil abuse and the temptations of despair.

<sup>1</sup> In this two-part essay, the second section of which will appear in *Culture*’s Spring issue, I present an empirical case study that follows up themes in “Performance and Power,” which appeared in the Fall, 2005, issue of *Culture*. I draw here from Part III of *The Civil Sphere*, which will be published early this summer by Oxford University Press.

Despite some disagreement about how best to participate in the culture wars, there was no debate about whether a culture war was in fact taking place. I began thinking about the different, and sometimes contrary, ways that sociologists use the term “culture wars.” I thought particularly about James Davison Hunter’s book *Culture Wars* (1991) as well as several critiques of Hunter’s work produced by Paul DiMaggio and his students from Princeton (DiMaggio et al 1996; Evans et al 2001; Evans 2002). The different conceptions of the term center on questions of what a culture war is, and when it occurs. Clarifying what we mean by this term is important, since so many sociologists use it regularly to characterize certain types of contemporary debates.

### **What is a Culture War?**

According to Hunter, a culture war involves competing assumptions about moral authority that divide participants into two camps (Hunter 1991, 34). In his analysis of cultural conflicts from the late 1980s, Americans are divided into orthodox and progressive camps. These two categories are used as shorthand to refer both to individual identities and to ideological positions on moral authority. Although the root of cultural conflict is moral authority, the conflict is played out in a variety of debates over social and political policy. In Hunter’s work, the agents in these policy debates are both individuals and organizations, which would indicate that the orthodox/progressive divide is located both in citizens and in institutions. He claims, “These moral visions take expression as *polarizing tendencies* or *impulses* in American culture,” (43).

Paul DiMaggio and others have critiqued Hunter’s work by using public opinion data in order to demonstrate that no clear polarization has occurred among Americans (DiMaggio et al 1996; Evans et al 2001; Evans 2002). They find, for instance, that in the arts—one of the major spaces of the late-80s culture war—public opinion polls in the 1990s showed relatively high support for the arts, with no particular bifurcation (DiMaggio and Bryson 2000).

The data clearly refute the notion of opinion polarization—with the notable exception of attitudes about abortion, which do cluster at the extremes (DiMaggio et al 1996). If we hang on to Hunter’s definition of a culture war, then we would have to simply conclude that no culture war has occurred in recent American history. We might be tempted to use DiMaggio’s findings about abortion attitudes and claim that there has been a culture war that was limited to the issue of abortion. However, that conclusion is untenable because the cultural component is missing. It is the element of culture that links otherwise disparate policy conflicts together into a coordinated war. *If* a culture war must include opinion polarization, and *if* Americans are actually in agreement on most issues except abortion, then it would seem that we have no culture war—just a policy conflict.

I am more inclined to respond to DiMaggio’s findings by saying that Hunter’s inclusion of polarization as a key element of a culture war must be wrong. Even Hunter’s original work seems conflicted about the role of public opinion. Immediately following the quotation above, Hunter says:

It is important...to make a distinction between how these moral visions are institutionalized in different organizations and in public rhetoric, and how ordinary Americans relate to them. In truth, most Americans occupy a vast middle ground between the polarizing impulses of American culture. Many will obviously lean toward one side while many others will tilt toward the other. Some Americans may seem altogether oblivious to either. The point is that most Americans, despite their predispositions, would not embrace a moral vision wholly or uncritically. Where the polarizing tendencies in American culture tend to be sharpest is in the organizations and spokespeople who have an interest in promoting a particular position on a social issue. (Hunter 1991, 43)

Given Hunter’s doubts about the significance of public opinion and the clear indication from the data that no polarization of opinion has occurred, what if we shift from an emphasis on opinion to an emphasis on policy, recognizing that public opinion is just one of many influences upon the formation of public policy? Consider Sharon Hays’s claim that “A nation’s laws reflect a nation’s values” (Hays 2003, 3). That would seem to indicate that policy is an embodiment of culture and policy formation is a kind of cultural production. We could conclude that culture wars are played out in policy-making but are not necessarily preceded by opinion polarization.<sup>2</sup>

This shift from thinking about culture wars in terms of public opinion, to conceptualizing them in terms of policy, matches the assumptions behind that ASA panel I attended. The four speakers made no reference to public opinion, but were very focused on public policies. But where’s the culture? If public policy is not an outcome of culture in the sense of polarized beliefs amongst citizens, how else might culture influence policy and produce conflict? The answer, I argue, is in institutions.<sup>3</sup> The actors who shape public policy do not speak as opinionated individuals so much as they serve as the mouthpieces for specific organizations. Hunter’s work does address the institutional component, finding that cultural conflict is located within, and not simply between, institutions. For example, conflicts between the orthodox and progressives occur within the church, within corporations, within the educational system, and within politics. In other words, we cannot make the mistake of conceptualizing the church as an orthodox institution that is in battle with the progressive world of schools. Rather, we might say that orthodox and progressive forces (later, I’ll move towards dropping these terms) have vied for power within *both* spheres (religion and education). The particular ways that each has influenced public policy are a result of the outcomes of these battles.

But DiMaggio's findings about opinion polarization offer a helpful clarification here. If public opinion is not polarized, then perhaps we should have second thoughts about treating culture wars as conflicts between two camps. In any specific policy battle, the reality is that a wide variety of forces contest for influence, and their influences embody a variety of beliefs and values. In my own work on arts controversies (Kidd 2004), I wrongly started with the assumption that battles over funding and regulation of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in the early 1990s were the result of a powerful and conservative political sphere exercising its might over a powerless and liberal art world. As I quickly learned, the art world actors in this battle represented powerful elite art institutions such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney, and the Corcoran. Other art world actors, whose voices ultimately had less influence on the eventual policy changes, tried to speak for more liberal perspectives. The Guerilla Girls, an anonymous feminist art collective, drew attention to the persistence of classism, sexism, racism, and homophobia in the art world—making the art world not so different from DC politics. In Washington DC, the contending interests included the political needs of both parties, the growing voice of American evangelicalism, leaders at the NEA who had legitimate claims to an arts background (in addition to their political and corporate ties), and the media commentators who spoke both about and to the political leadership. Just as terms like liberal and conservative are frequently critiqued for their failure to capture the real differences, and the real variety, in American political values, so also Hunter's orthodox/progressive terminology oversimplifies the dynamism of cultural conflict.<sup>4</sup>

One final element to contend with in defining a culture war—the media. The significance of the media was very clear in the ASA panel presentations and the ensuing discussion. It was also significant for Hunter. But its role is unclear, particularly in light of DiMaggio's findings. We might have assumed that the media served as a way for institutions to achieve their policy goals by influencing public opinion. But DiMaggio gives us reason to doubt that the media has that effect, with his finding that public opinion remains largely consistent despite well-publicized conflicts. Nevertheless, institutions clearly view the media as a significant force in policy conflict, and as a result, the presence of a media spectacle has become the major indicator that social scientists use to identify a culture war. This is just as true for DiMaggio as it is for Hunter. In their study of cultural conflict involving the arts in Philadelphia, DiMaggio et al (2001) used newspaper accounts in order to argue that these conflicts were a consistent element of Philadelphia's arts throughout the late twentieth century. The focus was on rejecting Hunter's claim that cultural conflict is intensifying—an issue I will address in the next section. But their methodology shared the understated methodological assumption in Hunter's work that a culture war involves heavy media analysis.

So, to answer the question of what a culture war is in a way that preserves the usefulness of the term, I suggest that a *culture war is a media-grabbing multi-vocal conflict within and across institutions that has consequences for the kinds of demands that institutions make on public policy*. The significance of a culture war is three-fold. First, a culture war is **Culture**

important for its capacity to capture the media's attention. Second, a culture war has inter- and intra-institutional consequences. And third, a culture war has significant policy consequences.

### ***When is a Culture War?***

Two answers to this question can be found in Hunter's work. On the one hand, there's an implication that the culture wars of which he speaks are isolated to the 1980s. His book was published in 1991, so I suspect that he would now extend that period into the 1990s and perhaps on up to today. At one point, he also suggests the beginnings of the contemporary culture war can be found in the 1960s. But the implication is that the term "culture wars" refers to a specific period in American history, and not a generalizable concept.

However, Hunter also implies that culture wars of various forms have appeared throughout American history and world history. He particularly discusses conflicts between Catholics and Protestants to control the culture of nineteenth century Europe, and efforts by American Protestants to curb the influence of Catholic and Jewish doctrines on social policy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The more recent culture war, in Hunter's work, is different from past conflict for not being strictly religious in character. Indeed, he claims that the contemporary war is fought within these religious institutions, and not between them. Another aspect of this culture war is its rapid development. What began as a mild ideological disagreement has climaxed into a near-apocalyptic battle, as hinted in the title of his follow-up work *Before the Shooting Begins* (1994).

Having already expressed discomfort with Hunter's reduction of cultural conflict to a battle of only two wills, I would now further discount Hunter's approach to the timing of culture wars for its teleological character. Just as ideology is more complicated than Hunter acknowledges, so too is the progress of history.

I am more comfortable with what I see as a tacit assumption underlying recent work on culture wars, such as the papers presented at the ASA panel on the topic: that culture wars appear and disappear at various moments throughout history. If we are in a culture war at the moment, as the ASA panelists suggest, we could then wonder if it is the same culture war that Hunter describes, or if that culture war ended and another has since begun. The panel abstract that was offered by the final program of the 2005 ASA meetings seems to indicate the former. It opens by saying that "For the past quarter century, cultural conflicts have divided Americans from one another, and rocked the balance of political power in the nation," (American Sociological Association 2005, 212). Why the past 25 years? What is the significance of that number? Obviously, the implication is that the current culture wars are linked to the beginning of the Reagan era, and there is an implied continuity between that era and the current Bush administration—a continuity marked by culture wars. Identifying the current culture war as 25-years-old also hints that eight years under a Democratic administration did nothing to curb

the conflict. That thesis is supported by Hays's analysis of welfare reform, which was signed into law by Bill Clinton (Hays 2003).

The problem with the 25-year timeframe is that it seems to arbitrarily ignore cultural conflict under the Carter administration. Despite the phrasing of the abstract, the actual papers that were presented at the ASA panel did not assume this 25-year span. Although they were all mindful of the importance of historical context, they focused on *contemporary* media debates and *contemporary* policy battles. Moreover, when we examine the specific content of cultural conflicts over the past 25 years, we find a great diversity in the ideological stances at play, a great diversity in the kinds of media attention that occur, and a great diversity of possible policy outcomes. The culture wars in the arts, for instance, are now over—not because we now have agreement on the meaning and value of the arts, but simply because there is neither a policy issue at stake, nor any sort of media attention on debates within the arts. If there's any fight like the old NEA debates that is now being waged, it is over the policies of the Federal Communications Commission, including its attempts to deregulate the economic practices of the media, while symbolically increasing regulation of media content. Attempts to compare the Janet Jackson/Justin Timberlake costume malfunction with the controversial photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe are interesting, but they fail to see that the cultural content is different, the relevant ideologies are different, the possible policy outcomes are completely different, and the participants in the battle have changed. Hunter's pluralization of wars in the title *Culture Wars* suggests that he also may not have been convinced of the singularity of the conflict.

Rejecting Hunter's notion of a singular culture wars period in the late 1980s that was the conclusion to a long history of ideological polarization, I conclude that *culture wars are multiple, that they appear at various points throughout history, and that they may overlap with other culture wars*. Given the diversity and complexity of America, as well as the extension of cultural conflicts to a global scale, it is possible for some cultural camps to wage one war, while other groups face other cultural battles.

The subtitle of the ASA panel that inspired these thoughts was "From Public Issues to Personal Problems and Back Again." Despite my fascination with other people's personal problems, never mind my own, I think we would do better to go from public issues to *methodological problems*—and back again—in order to better understand the character and scope of these so-called culture wars.

#### Notes

1. For reviewing drafts of this essay, many thanks to Magali Sarfatti Larson, Bethany Bryson, Stephanie Gabis, Felicia Wu Song, and Glenn Lucke.

2. In fairness, Hunter never directly states that a culture war is composed of opinion polarization and intra-institutional conflict. Rather, he *frequently* implies a polarization of American opinions up until this moment when he states that "most Americans occupy a vast middle ground."

3. See Powell and DiMaggio (1991) for a stronger discussion of the relationship between culture and institutional practices.

4. This critique is also expressed in DiMaggio and Bryson (2000; and 1995), who call for a "multidimensional view."

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## **Mission Statement**

Since the 1980's, culture has again become a key concept and central research theme within the social sciences, particularly within sociology. This "cultural turn" had a profound impact on the general sociological research agenda and on the content of academic sociological curricula. It was therefore appropriate to set up an autonomous research network for the sociology of culture within the framework of the European Sociological Association. The main aim of the network is to provide a forum for discussion and exchange for sociologists of culture who are either based in Europe or whose research is devoted to one or more aspects of "culture in Europe." In addition, the network may also act as a European forum for the exchange of teaching experiences in the field of the sociology of culture. Last but not least, the network wants to be an intellectual space in which the different trends that nowadays re-articulate Europe's cultural identity can be discussed from a sociological point of view.

Within the sociology of culture, there exists general agreement that genuine cultural practices and artefacts have to do with the symbolization and experience, individually or collectively, of shared representations (the Durkheimian tradition) or shared meanings (the Weberian or interpretative tradition). The network acknowledges a well-established tradition of quantitative and qualitative empirical research on the symbolic and experiential character of cultural practices or artefacts on the one hand, and on the relationships between the latter and the belonging to specific social categories or groups, ranging from classes over ethnic groups to local subcultures, on the other hand. The network wants to continue this Janus-faced tradition and stimulate cross-regional and cross-national comparisons. In line with this tradition, the network aims to further the ongoing

sociological debate on the importance of cultural identities, symbolic boundaries, multiculturalism and "identity work" within contemporary European society.

Another prominent research theme is cultural change. Thus, much attention has been given during recent years to the processes, or their effects, of secularization, globalization (including the breakthrough of "the network society"), individualization, value change and "cultural pluralization." Still other sociologists of culture stress the growing professionalization and "mediatization" of culture. Culture indeed no longer has predominantly to do with a pre-given collective consciousness or life-world. Nowadays, many cultural practices are unthinkable without the professional production and mediation of all kinds of goods and artefacts. The latter are differently received and appropriated according to the socially structured cultural frameworks of their users. All this is reflected in the growing importance of the notions of "lifestyle," "cultural economy" and "production of culture" within the sociology of culture. Moreover, one may note a heightened sociological interest in the functioning of various kinds of cultural organizations.

Another research area that is well-established within the sociology of culture concerns the existence of cultural hierarchies. These are related to social or status hierarchies and imply manifest or latent operations of distinction, of exclusion or closure, and of power exercise. Seen in this light, the notion of culture refers to different kinds of arenas in which individuals as well as social groups negotiate claims on cultural recognition and legitimacy. Recent research suggests that traditional cultural hierarchies are shifting and re-articulated, e.g. the difference between so-called high and low culture, the arts and popular entertainment. Simultaneously, research on the links between culture and power has been expanded into new areas, particularly gender and ethnicity. Empirical research also addresses the enduring importance of education and schooling in the establishment and reproduction of cultural hierarchies and life-styles.

During recent years, new research themes and theoretical concepts have enriched the sociology of culture. Thus, the notion of cultural memory has given rise to a broader scholarly interest in the uses of various cultural forms for the representation of actual conflicts, contested memories, or controversial events. More generally, the public use of cultural symbols or artefacts has become a central theme in the research of many European and American scholars. Also, interesting research has been done on diaspora cultures and trans-national cultures, and on everyday life and micro-practices of cultural (re)production. At a more theoretical level, but with important empirical ramifications, the sociology of culture has recently been enriched by conceptual contributions from adjacent disciplines, particularly media theory and performance theory. The network wants to act as a forum for the critical discussion of these and other renewals, particularly from the point of view of their fruitfulness for empirical research.

In order to promote collaboration and scholarly exchange between European-based sociologists of culture and non-European sociologists with an interest in specific aspects of "culture in Europe," the network will organize sessions and meetings at regular ESA conferences; in-between the latter, an interim conference should be the rule. The network also aims at a regular European summer school on the sociology of culture and wants to facilitate publications, in the broad sense, that

further comparison and discussion within the mentioned research areas. Besides, it will seek opportunities for editing books or thematic issues of existing journals which bring together papers presented within the context of the network. Last but not least, the network hopes to stimulate research initiatives within the sociology of culture that commit themselves to a comparative perspective.

## Books of Note

*Richard A. Peterson, Vanderbilt University*

Inglis, David and John Hughson, editors. *The Sociology of Art: Ways of Seeing*. New York: Palgrave, Macmillan. The first seven articles are on aspects of theory including the work of Pierre Bourdieu, whose orientation to art (rather than that of Adorno or Becker) grounds most of the articles. A surprisingly large proportion of the citations are to works published before 1990, and it is interesting to see how well the sociology of art stands up without the explosion of more recent work. The final six chapters focus on specific art forms set in particular places and times. These include the view of aging in Victorian painting, the art-movie house, early opera, contemporary world music, the trans-national ballet world, and architecture and tradition as seen in the rebuilding of Berlin. The sub-title "Ways of Seeing" is not explained but, as used by the editors, seems to refer to the critical reflexive stance of the United Kingdom-trained authors.

Bryson, Bethany. *Making Multiculturalism: Boundaries and Meaning in U.S. English Departments*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press. Bryson offers a high-energy presentation of the disputes surrounding the challenge to the literary canon posed by those advocating the inclusion of African-American, female, and other "minority" authors of note. She finds that the "culture wars" that rage outside the university are not found within the four English departments where she did field work. The conflicts there are shaped by the differing organizational structures of the four universities rather than by the contrasting values of those involved.

Alexander, Victoria D. and Marilyn Rueschemeyer. *Art and the State: The Visual Arts in Comparative Perspective*. New York: Palgrave, Macmillan. The authors examine the impact of government policies on art in the US, the UK, Norway, and Sweden. In addition, they study the effects on the arts wrought by changes in East German, and the experiences of artists who left the Soviet Union for the West.

Howard, Philip N. *New Media Campaigns and the Managed Citizen*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Howard examines the evolving process of political campaigning over the five election cycles from 1996 to 2004. Both grassroots and political party campaigns have gone on line, built multimedia strategies, and constructed complex relational databases. This

new system of producing political culture has immense implications for the meaning of citizenship and the basis of representation.

Scott, Alan and Helmut Staubmann. *Georg Simmel: An Essay in the Philosophy of Art*. New York: Routledge. This work on the meaning of the paintings of Rembrandt has not until now been available in English. Simmel not only looks at the works of Rembrandt, but he also reflexively examines his own theoretical position on such topics as religion, individuality, and death. In this context Simmel sees the individuality in the painting as coming from unique traits and not from social relationships, the focus in much of Simmel's other work. Readers will find that much art-historical writing on Rembrandt has been drawn from Simmel, hitherto unavailable to non-German readers.

Thornton, Arland. *Reading History Sideways: The Fallacy and Enduring Impact of the Developmental Paradigm on Family Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Thornton states that the consensus of scholars has been that until 1800 North-western European societies had extended family housing units, arranged marriage, the close control of adolescents and only slight individualism, and that the pattern of the nuclear family, marriage by courtship, and individualism came only with industrialization. He says in fact the change to the nuclear family had occurred by 1300, and that the earlier error derived from the then-prevalent view that family structure in all societies went through the same sequence of stages. The Western system is not the most "advanced", and there is no inherent reason why the extended family patterns of Asia and Africa will "evolve."

Kruse, Holly. *Site and Sound: Understanding Independent Music Scenes*. New York: Peter Lang. Kruse shows how the various indie rock and pop music scenes developed and thrived in the 1980s and 1990s. Those involved in the production and consumption of "indie" music thought of their practices as largely independent of the larger music industry, even though some acts recorded for major labels.

Thompson, Stacy. *Punk Productions: Unfinished Business*. Albany NY: SUNY Press. Focusing on a range of punk scenes and describing the experience of the punk record labels, Thompson grounds the punk aesthetic not in style but in opposi-

tion to commodification by the international music industry and the monopoly capitalist world it represents. He shows the successes and failures experienced by punks in building an autonomous economic system.

Velasco Ortiz, Laura. Mixtec Transnational Identity. Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press. The author describes the emergence of an identity forged of Mexican and US elements that has emerged through a process that might be called "collective agency" in the region straddling the US-Mexican border. She focuses on the role of immigrant organizations and indigenous migrant leaders in forging this transnational identity.

Duina, Francesco. The Social Construction of Free Trade. Ewing, NJ: Princeton University Press. Duina focuses on the evolving culture of the European Union, NAFTA, and Mercosur and shows that they do not derive from or evolve toward a single economic model but were constructed through political bargaining and struggle.

Velthuis, Olav. Talking Prices: Symbolic Meanings of Prices on the Market for Contemporary Art. Ewing, NJ: Princeton University Press. In sharp contrast to classical economic theory, Velthuis reveals the rich world behind the price of art works. Art dealers distinguish different types of prices, so that, in effect, the pricing mechanism constitutes a symbolic system akin to language.

### **Error**

The correct title of Robert C. Bulman's, Worth Publishers book is: Hollywood Goes to High School: Cinema, Schools, and American Culture.

### **Four from Oxford University Press**

Burt, Ronald S. Brokerage and Closure: An Introduction to Social Capital. Burt asserts that markets, organizations, and careers are becoming more dependent on informal discretionary relationships which are the realm of social capital. He suggests that there are two sorts of action at work, "brokerage", the process of linking distinct circles of people, and "closure," the process of closing networks to outside contacts. He shows how these two contradictory forces operate to stabilize innovative group structures.

Carter, Prudence. Keepin' It Real: School Success beyond Black and White. Common wisdom has it that racial stratification accounts for the resistance of African American and Latino students to "acting white," thus dooming themselves to lower levels of achievement. Carter finds that the most successful are those who become adept at operating in multiple cultural worlds.

Bakhle, Janaki. Two Men and Music: Nationalism in the Making of an Indian Classical Tradition. Bakhle shows that, in spite of the fact that Muslims were the major practitioners of Indian classical music, the reconfiguration of the music as an "Indian" cultural tradition caused the exclusion of Muslims by

the Brahmanic elite. Bakhle concludes that a nation's imaginings from politics to culture reflect rather than transform societal divisions.

McGee, Micki. Self-Help, Inc.: Makeover Culture in American Life. Self-help schemes have always been important in the US, but why has there been a two-fold increase in such books over the past quarter of a century? McGee points to two factors, the great decrease in job security coupled with the entry of large numbers of women into an unstable jobs market.

### **Five from Rowman and Littlefield on mis-information in the media**

Kendall, Diana. Media Representations of Wealth and Poverty in America. Through an analysis of newspaper articles and television shows, Kendall shows how the media perpetuate negative stereotypes about the working class and the poor while glorifying the material possessions and privileged status of the upper classes.

Larson, Stephanie Greco. Media and Minorities: The Politics of Race in News and Entertainment. Shows that minority stereotypes are ubiquitous on television entertainment programs and that the same stereotypes are used in political discourse and the coverage of minority candidates running for office. Such stereotypes are conveyed by the choice of words and reinforced by the visual images.

Heider, Don, editor. Class and News. Heider shows that people's beliefs about class reflect how media create or reinforce social values.

McNamee, Stephen J. and Robert K. Miller. The Meritocracy Myth. The authors challenge the widely held American belief in meritocracy and identifies a variety of factors that suppress, neutralize, or negate the effects of merit, creating artificial barriers to individual mobility.

Rosenberg, Howard. Not So Prime Time: Chasing the Trivial on American Television. Media critic Howard Rosenberg traces what he sees as TV's relentless pursuit of the mundane in its apparent quest to dumb down America.

### **Polity's Four**

Badinter, Elisabeth. Dead-End Feminism. Elizabeth Badinter, France's leading feminist theorist, argues that many contemporary feminists answer men's attempts to reinstate dominance through violence by working to institute a new moral order that presupposes reestablishing the old stereotypes and old roles, social, economic, and sexual.

Merrin, William. Baudrillard and the Media: A Critical Introduction. Merrin places Baudrillard in the tradition of a radical Durkheimian critique of the media. He focuses on his theory of symbolic exchange, his critique of the semiotic and simulation, and his theory of the non-event.

Cashmore, Ellis. Tyson: Nurture of the Beast. In the context of presenting a compelling account of an intriguing career and life story, Cashmore offers an uncompromising critique of late twentieth-century US race relations.

Bauman, Zygmunt. Liquid Life. Bauman works out the implications of a society controlled by those who David Riesman half a century ago called "other directed." Bauman suggests it is a world not as much concerned with acquisition as with getting rid of things.

### University of California Press' Eight

Edin, Kathryn and Maria Kefalas. Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage. Based on extensive in-depth interviews, the authors probe the many reasons why these women put children ahead of marriage in this welfare state.

Reese, Ellen. Backlash Against Welfare Mothers: Past and Present. Reese's study sheds new light on the contemporary welfare backlash by reconstructing the dynamics of the earlier wave of attacks on welfare mothers half a century ago, an effort led by conservative low-wage employers.

Smith, Robert Courtney. Mexican New York: Transnational Lives of New Immigrants. Smith illustrates how immigrants move back and forth between New York and their home village, Puebla and in the process forge new gender roles, new strategies of social mobility, race, and brand of politics.

Gray, Herman S. Cultural Moves: African Americans and the Politics of Representation. In this series of linked essays, Gray shows that black artists, scholars, musicians, and others have been instrumental in reconfiguring social and cultural life in the United States.

Kun, Josh. Audiotopia: Music, Race, and America. Ranging from klezmer to hip hop to Latin rock, Kun shows the importance of music in the debates over American identity.

Moallem, Minoo. Between Warrior Brother and Veiled Sister: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Politics of Patriarchy in Iran. Moallem argues that Islamic nationalism and fundamentalism are by-products of modernity. She sees the gendered notions of brother and sister as key to understanding the invention of the Islamic *ummat* as a modern fraternal community.

Finkelstein, Norman G. Beyond Chutzpah: On the Misuse of Anti-Semitism and the Abuse of History. Finkelstein shows the lengths to which some American Jews will go to present Israel in a favorable light.

Chidester, David. Authentic Fakes: Religion and Popular American Culture. Chidester explores the religious dimensions of popular culture found in unexpected places. These include

baseball, the Human Genome Project, Coca-Cola, rock and roll, the rhetoric of Ronald Reagan, the charisma of Tom Jones, Tupperware, and the free market.

### Three from University Press of America

Schoenfeld, Lois Beth. Dysfunctional Families in the Wessex Novels of Thomas Hardy. Schoenfeld asks why Thomas Hardy created so many dysfunctional families in his Wessex novels that are focused on the rural artisan stratum of the working class. She suggests that the novels were part of the calls for social reform at that time.

Brook, Daniel. Social Change and Cultural Continuity in Czechoslovakia and China. Brook explores the role of symbol manipulation in the making of the Czechoslovak "Velvet Revolution" in 1989.

Choi, Jongryul. Postmodern American Sociology: A Response to the Aesthetic Challenge. Choi maintains that in postmodernism ontology, epistemology, and ethics/politics have been aestheticized.

### Sage's Pine Forge Press Offers Three

Sacco, Vincent F. When Crime Waves. Sacco asks when and why crime rates change over time. He examines why some types of crime and not others come in waves, how the ways we count crimes sometimes create waves, and the role played by the mass media, politicians, and interest group leaders in the production of crime waves.

Klinenberg, Eric, editor. Cultural Production in a Digital Age. The authors examine the diverse consequences of our increasing reliance on digital technologies: Do they reduce the costs of entering cultural markets for those who have been previously marginalized? Or do they create new means for large organizations to consolidate and centralize that production? How do nations and corporations define, control, and regulate intellectual property rights? To what extent do video gaming and gambling feed psychic needs? Why, if digital technologies render place irrelevant, do technology firms and cultural producers cluster in close proximity? How have digital technologies afforded both opportunities for social activism and diversions from political participation? And more.

Marshall, Lee. Bootlegging: Romanticism and Copyright in the Music Industry. Marshall provides the first full length academic treatment of bootlegs, the live concert recordings or studio outtakes reproduced without the permission of the rights holder. He shows that the desire for bootlegs is driven by the same ideals of authenticity employed used by the legitimate industry in its copyright rhetoric and practice and demonstrates how bootlegs exist as an antagonistic but necessary component of an industry that does much to prevent them.

Smart, Barry. The Sport Star: Modern Sport and the Cultural Economy of Sporting Celebrity. Smart analyses the development of modern sport in the UK and the US, demonstrating the economic and cultural factors that have contributed to the popularity of sport stars, examining issues such as race and gender, the impact of professionalization, growing media coverage, the role of agents and the increasing presence of commercial corporations in sponsorship and endorsement contracts. He discusses sports stars including Michael Jordan, David Beckham, Tiger Woods, Anna Kournikova and the Williams sisters.

In addition **Ashgate** has released a flurry of diverse titles in its "Popular Music" series. The ones not mentioned before include:

Bennett, Andy, editor. Remembering Woodstock.

Reising, Russell, editor. 'Speak to Me': The Legacy of Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side of the Moon*.

Dauncey, Hugh and Steve Cannon, editors. Popular Music in France from Chanson to Techno: Culture, Identity and Society.

Tate, Joseph, editor. The Music and Art of Radiohead.

Gebesmair, Andreas, editor. Global Repertoires: Popular Music Within and Beyond the Transnational Music Industry.

Davison, Annette. Hollywood Theory, Non-Hollywood Practice: Cinema Soundtracks in the 1980's and 1990's.

Reising, Russell, editor. 'Every Sound There Is': The Beatles' *Revolver* and the Transformation of Rock and Roll.

Garnett, Liz. The British Barbershopper: A Study in Socio-Musical Values.

Fouz-Hernandez, Santiago, editor. Madonna's Drowned Worlds: New Approaches to her Cultural Transformations, 1983-2003.

Hyder, Rehan. Brimful of Asia: Negotiating Ethnicity on the UK Music Scene.

Brocken, Michael. The British Folk Revival: 1944-2002.

Warner, Timothy. Pop Music — Technology and Creativity: Trevor Horn and the Digital Revolution.

Hawkins, Stan. Settling the Pop Score: Pop Tests and Identity Politics.

Hawkins, Peter. Chanson: The French Singer-Songwriter from Aristide Bruant to the Present Day.

Green, Lucy. How Popular Musicians Learn: A Way Ahead for Music Education.

**New or renewed section memberships: <http://asanet.org/>**

**Culture Section webpage: <http://ibiblio.org/culture/>**

