



Message from the Chair

Cultural Sociology and Cultural Studies

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Writing in *Lingua Franca*, a now-defunct journal of academic politics and gossip, the NYU physicist Alan Sokal (in his personal life, a left-wing activist) recounts the outline of a satirical article he successfully submitted to the cultural studies journal *Social Text*, whose editors didn't recognize the article as a spoof of the stiflingly politicized quality of their scholarship. The heavily-footnoted *Social Text* article was hilariously entitled, "Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity" (1996).

I claim that quantum gravity . . . has profound political implications (which, of course, are "progressive"). In support of this improbable proposition, I proceed as follows: First, I quote some controversial philosophical pronouncements of Heisenberg and Bohr, and assert (without argument) that quantum physics is profoundly consonant with "postmodern epistemology." Next I assemble a pastiche—Derrida and general relativity, Lacan and topology, Irigaray and quantum gravity—held together by vague references to "nonlinearity," "flux," and "interconnectedness." Finally, I jump (again without argument) to the assertion that "postmodern science" has abolished the concept of objective reality. . . . I go on to suggest (once again, without argument) that science, in order to be liberatory, must be subordinated to political strategies (Sokal 2000, pp. 50-1).

The editors of *Social Text* didn't see the humor of Sokal's feint. Evincing little embarrassment over their own decisions, they condemned Sokal for breaching academic ethics in perpetrating the hoax (Robbins and Ross 1996).

This academic "breaching experiment" reveals the hazards of entering the intellectual "trading zones" that Lyn Spillman (citing the physicist and historian of physics Peter Galison) proposed as the topos of the Culture Section's second Twentieth Anniversary Symposium, "Cultural Sociology and its Others," last August. In Lyn's paraphrase, trading zones are "thick borders between subcultures of knowledge production where full paradigmatic translation never quite happens but 'pidgin' and even 'creole' languages develop for practical communication" (2008, p. 3). Enter those trading zones we must, and not just for pressing practical

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Department Feature

The Georgia Workshop on Culture, Power, and History

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The Georgia Workshop on Culture, Power, and History (GCPH) is organized by Elizabeth Cherry, David Smilde, and Erin Winter and receives funding from UGA's Center for Humanities and Arts. Following a workshop format, the GCPH emphasizes collaborative, in-depth discussion of papers in progress

While qualitative approaches dominated the workshop, two scholars approached the study of culture quantitatively. Ronald Breiger (University of Arizona) looked at the "duality" of cases and variables. While techniques such as Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) show how cases can be seen as configurations of variables, Breiger used Correspondence Analysis (à la Bourdieu) to show the inverse—variables can be seen as configurations of cases. Building on Charles Ragin's work, Breiger finds that QCA complemented specifically by barycentric correspondence analysis brings to light information traditional comparative analysis leaves obscured. Breiger illuminated these difficult concepts with a personalized demonstration, analyzing data from GCPH organizer David Smilde's 2005 *AJS* article that employed QCA. Like Breiger, Roberto Franzosi (Emory University) took a quantitative approach. He presented a new, computer-based technique that allows scholars to do line-by-line transformation of narratives into general types of linguistic structures in order reveal the relationships among the particular words people use when narrating an event. By transforming narrative into statistically analyzable data, Franzosi attempts

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reasons (sociology is losing undergraduate enrollments to cultural studies, global studies, and a host of other such programs). If we enter trading zones in the spirit of critical reflexivity that characterized the papers presented at that symposium, we have much to learn from the experience.

Institution and Discipline

Cultural studies shares with cultural sociology an ambition to span the humanities and the social sciences. It shares as well an engagement with social problems, and a rejection of naïve positivism and abstracted empiricism. Richard Johnson's "What is Cultural Studies Anyway" in *Social Text* (1986-7) bears at least suggestive resemblance to Wendy Griswold's "A Methodological Framework for the Sociology of Culture" in *Sociological Methodology* (1987); Johnson's injunction to trace the circuits of cultural production articulates with Griswold's focus on "the cultural diamond."

Yet the relation of cultural studies to traditional disciplines—and to traditional notions of disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity—is problematic. In the preface to the seminal reader *Cultural Studies*, the co-editors Cary Nelson, Paula Treichler, and Lawrence Grossberg assert that "cultural studies is an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and sometimes counter-disciplinary field. . ." (1992, p. 4). This assertion is contradictory on its face, since no field can share three such mutually exclusive properties at once. This is not the place to discuss conceptions of interdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity, and counter-disciplinarity (Diana Crane presented a most interesting paper at the symposium on that very subject); suffice it to invoke the biologist Joseph Schwab's conception that "disciplines" center around principles and methods of inquiry appropriate to particular subject-matters, by establishing the grounds for judging how appropriately problems are posed and refined. "In all fields, the 'hard sciences' included, systematic inquiries begin in principles of inquiry, guiding conceptions of the subject matter which determine what problems to put to it, what data are relevant to its solution, what these data indicate (that is, how they are to be interpreted)" (1969, 83-4). The co-editors of *Cultural Studies* introduce their volume by begging the defining issues of principles and methods. It is one thing, as Andrew Goodwin and Janet Wolff argue (1997, p. 138), to criticize the hegemonic limitations of established disciplines; it is another to indulge in in-discipline, a lack of scholarly rigor.

I have a special interest in cultural studies because I was the founding director of the first stand-alone PhD program in that field in the US, at George Mason University. Unlike other cultural studies programs, the program was not marginalized within its university. As a relatively young public institution,

George Mason's ambitions to develop doctoral programs in traditional disciplines used to encounter strong resistance from the state higher education bureaucracy, which acted to protect the competitive interests of longstanding programs at the venerable Virginia state universities to which it was more beholden. The program's rollout featured a week of public lectures in the university's concert hall by Jacques Derrida, Gayatri Spivak, and Larry Levine. Within a year of its founding, the program had attracted sixty affiliated faculty members from ten different departments. Its faculty included Marty Lipset, Betty Friedan, the social historians Larry Levine and Roy Rosenzweig, and the hermeneutic Austrian economist Don Lavoie (all of whom, sadly and incredibly, have passed away). The program has graduated a steady stream of students, the vast majority of whom have found tenure-track academic jobs, and one of whom was awarded a MacArthur fellowship while still a student.

But the program faced its share of problems and failures. Lipset and Friedan, for example, were denied their due veneration within the program for politics considered too centrist. The intense intellectual dialogue that the program inspired from its inception turned almost immediately to fractious disputation. To the end, there was debate over the very model of "cultural studies" that the program should adopt--the sort of transplanted British cultural neomarxism represented by the Grossberg, Treichler, and Nelson reader; or the broader "cultural turn" in the humanities and social sciences as represented for example by Chandra Mukerji's and Michael Schudson's pioneering *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies* (1991).

In its former variant, cultural studies had originated in the postwar work of the literary critic Richard Hoggart and the social historians Raymond Williams and E.P. Thompson. Those three colleagues were "old left" adult education teachers, who ambitiously extended traditional disciplinary methods into areas of inquiry designed to promote working-class consciousness and solidarity, and thereby unsettled the old elitist and objectified concept of culture. Stuart Hall, the center's second director, describes (1980) the center's originary "break from sociology" as a response to its hostile reception by sociology (as well as the other traditional humanistic and social science disciplines), despite cultural studies's receptivity to symbolic interactionism, *Verstehen*, phenomenology, and hermeneutics. Hall also describes how the intellectual tradition of the center was transformed by a series of other "breaks." The first of these he ascribes to the influence of Lukacs, Goldmann, Benjamin, and the Frankfurt School, contributing to a "complex Marxism." With even broader strokes, we

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might describe cultural studies as an intellectual movement of the New New Left. As both Hall and Seidman (1997) note, cultural studies was transformed yet again in the 90s by the influence of feminism and various forms of identity politics. (Elizabeth Long's important 1989 review article demonstrates that, without recognition, feminism had actually been integral to the Birmingham Centre from the beginning.) The Centre fell victim to academic politics and was abolished in 2002.

The Limitations of Iconic Texts

Unpacking Birmingham's iconic sociological monographs reveals how ideological commitment constricts even its best scholarship. Paul Willis's *Learning to Labor* (1977), for example is a classic ethnographic account of subcultural defiance by the enterprising student troublemakers of a dreary working-class state school—defiance that only dooms the “lads,” through the predictable step of school failure, to lives of factory work. But Tony Giddens, in *The Constitution of Society*, puts Willis's findings to more effective theoretical use than Willis himself does. Although Willis's findings are profoundly surprising, Willis's own explicitly political methodological commitments dictate that ethnography should be pre-theorized rather than grounded.

We must not be too ambitious. It is vital that we admit the most basic foundations of our research approach and accept that no 'discovery' will overthrow this most basic orientation. . . .

...It is the turning away from a full commitment . . . which finally limits the methods of traditional sociology.

It is in these moments that there can be a distinctive relationship with a specifically Marxist form of analysis. The terrain uncovered and explored during this reflexive stage is likely to concern contradictions and tensions. . . . (1980, pp, 190, 192).

Similarly, Dick Hebdige's *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979) presents an engrossing and esthetically colorful tableau of the postwar subcultural styles of British youth—Teddy boys, mods and rockers, skinheads and punks. But Hebdige too limits the value of the theoretical lessons he can derive from his observations, because he pre-theorizes them as a matter of principle. Without warrant, he frames his study within the major themes he finds in Genet's *The Thief's Journal*: “the status and meaning of revolt, the idea of style as a form of Refusal, the elevation of crime into art” (p. 2). He postulates rather than fully demonstrates that “tensions between dominant and subordinate groups can be found reflected in the surfaces of subculture” (p. 2). He seeks to redress the “number of significant flaws” that he discerns in participant-observation, “in particular, the lack of any analytic or explanatory framework” (p. 75); he asserts that “while accounts based on a participant observation

approach provide a wealth of descriptive detail, the significance of class and power relations is consistently neglected or at least underestimated” (p.76). His theoretical biases blind him to the possibility that subcultures can be integrative with the larger culture (as David Matza argues) rather than oppositional—and indeed, Hebdige mistakenly invokes Matza (although not in just these terms) as a conflict rather than a control theorist (pp. 76-7). Neither Willis nor Hebdige addresses perhaps the most significant questions about the working class—why there is as much social mobility out of the lower class as there is, and why those left behind in the lower class are as politically conservative as they are.

Even “revisionist” sociological work within the Birmingham tradition limits its power by its rejection of non-marxist sociology. Two decades and a feminist turn after Willis and Hebdige's work, Angela McRobbie studied *British Fashion Design: Rag Trade or Image Industry?* (1998). McRobbie's explicit political aim is to rescue from the “new right” young women struggling to become “new cultural workers” under the Thatcherite regime of enterprise culture. Guided by Richard Johnson's method of exploring sites along the circuit of fashion production, her work is less rigidly ideological than either Willis's or Hebdige's. And because she draws on Foucault and Bourdieu as well as Hall, her monograph articulates with disciplinary sociology. Yet her study suffers from neglect of precisely those mainstream traditions that are most relevant to it. Aside from “echoes of Marx,” she finds no salience in 19th-century grand theory—as if Simmel had never written about fashion, or Durkheim and Simmel had never written about changing forms of association due to individuation and the division of labor. Nor does she acknowledge the ethnographic tradition—running from John Dewey to Everett Hughes to Anselm Strauss to Howard Becker to Gary Fine—that analyzes art and culture as a form of work.

My own (re)readings of these three iconic texts accord with the review authored by Steven Jay Sherwood, Phil Smith, and Jeff Alexander (in *Contemporary Sociology*) of Grossberg, Treichler, and Nelson's *Cultural Studies* reader. Those reviewers identify five problematic assumptions running throughout the many readings: (1) institutionalized social structures are hierarchical and oppressive; (2) culture is reduced to power; (3) forms of culture may be either hegemonic or resistant, hence the importance of “identity”; (4) culturally-informed action is not meaning-oriented but strategic; (5) cultural studies must be deeply ideological.

Other prominent cultural sociologists endorse this critique. Michael Schudson charges that “cultural studies protects political presuppositions from critical evaluation. . . . Culture is if anything more

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Culture and its Others: The 2008 Anniversary Symposium

Suzanna Crage, Indiana University; Nikole Hotchkiss, Indiana University; Sara Skiles, University of Notre Dame; Michael Strand, University of Notre Dame

This year's symposium—"Culture and Its Others"—considered how cultural sociologists relate, borrow, learn and share knowledge and approaches across a range of disciplinary boundaries.

Cultural sociology is an "invisible college" that lives in the "trading zone" between disciplines, constantly transcending boundaries to develop unique "pidgin languages" and conduct synthetic and original research. Section chair Lyn Spillman (Notre Dame) began the symposium with this proposition. For Spillman, to be a cultural sociologist requires "scholarly omnivorousness."

In the morning plenary, panelists proposed different ways to "trade" knowledge with other disciplines. Chandra Mukerji (UC-San Diego) argued that cultural sociology is unique because it recognizes the importance of relationships with "others." Instead of building gaps, it bridges them. Her work focuses on the relationships between "people and material things." Mukerji argued that "built environments are memory palaces," and cultural sociologists study how "things become socially meaningful" through classification and performance. Because meaning is made through material objects, control of materiality is a form of "logistical power" that works through meanings.

Karen Cerulo (Rutgers) called for a "cognitive turn" to supplement the "cultural turn." Cognitive science has shown that neural activity is enriched by situational factors, but sociology has not yet reciprocated. To help bridge this gap, Cerulo outlined three areas where cultural sociologists could engage with findings emerging from cognitive science.

Gary Alan Fine (Northwestern) made a case for a cultural sociology of local action. Fine explored the performative aspects of a 1970s conversation among three boys discussing how to French kiss. The conversation reflected its particular context and increased the social ties among the boys. Fine argued that culture here is behavioral: it is one domain of action.

Discussing interdisciplinarity in the social sciences, Diana Crane (Pennsylvania) emphasized that not only does cultural sociology have the basis for transdisciplinary exchange, but other cultural disciplines (history, anthropology, etc.) are grounded in the same frameworks. Relying on our common ground with other fields should help us to identify and work within trading zones. Crane's talk echoed Spillman's call for cultural sociologists to be "scholarly omnivores"—only by pushing past the boundaries of our own interests and joining conversations in other disciplines that speak to our own work can we build on the interdisciplinary

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Fourth Annual UCSD Culture Conference: Calhoun, Swidler and Others Address "Crisis, Emergency, and Global Processes"

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Emergency and Crisis as cultural categories were the theme of this year's Annual Culture Conference at the University of California, San Diego on May 9, 2008. Now in its fourth year, this event took on a global perspective.

Craig Calhoun gave the morning keynote address. Calhoun spoke about humanitarian emergencies as a cultural category, and argued that conceptualizing a natural disaster or a technological failure as a humanitarian emergency is only possible due to certain assumptions about human suffering and global responsibility. Calhoun outlined some of the ideological shifts that have occurred over time to establish and redefine the parameters of the category "humanitarian emergency."

Calhoun asserted that while suffering is an age-old concept, humanitarian emergencies are relatively new. In the contemporary era, humanitarian emergencies exist because: 1) it is possible to organize action from a remote distance; 2) the concept of human suffering is ethically compelling to strangers; 3) humanity is implicated as a whole to take responsibility to alleviate unjust suffering; and 4) response seems urgent. He also made the case that without the historical ideologies of charity for strangers, imperialism, and progress (specifically the decline of the idea that humans are resigned to fate or God's will), the cultural frame for humanitarian emergencies that we employ today would not exist in the same way.

Calhoun argued that humanitarianism today has become a field in the Bourdieusian sense. Humanitarianism must defend itself by having boundaries that protect it from being received as political action, economic action, or military force. Category boundaries are critical, particularly because humanitarianism, indeed, involves political action—emergencies are moments when global aid must step in to resolve crises that local governments cannot resolve on their own. Humanitarianism also involves economic action. In fact, entire economies of aid and relief efforts exist, from businesses and institutions devoted to producing goods, to training service-people for aid work.

Ann Hironaka discussed the cultural category of "genocide" as a crisis that is identified in some cases, while other, similarly catastrophic cases are labeled "civil wars," the latter of which do not evoke a crisis response. Hironaka highlighted the tensions that arise when international intervention takes place in situations that are not recognized as genocide. Weapons transfer, economic aid, permission to use military resources such as bases—all are seen as attempts at imperialism unless the help is offered to local forces who are defending themselves from a recognized genocide attempt. Genocide has official definitions according to international human rights language, and

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strength within cultural sociology.

Morning Workshops

Panelists in the Culture and Stratification workshop suggested ways that cultural sociologists can expand their research agendas and develop new lines of inquiry that speak to other sociology subfields and social science disciplines. Mitchell Stevens (NYU) reminded us that the study of stratification is the meat and potatoes of sociology, so cultural sociologists whose work engages themes of inequality have an automatic connection with other sociologists. Elizabeth A. Armstrong (Indiana) suggested that the study of cultural stratification could benefit from an organizations or network approach, or, as her discussion of her recent research on dormitory life illustrates, a micro approach. Cynthia Epstein (CUNY) discussed that categorization is the structural underpinning of stratification, and that, accordingly, religion plays a part in stratification—but little attention is paid to the power of religious beliefs in the stratification literature. Omar Lizardo (Notre Dame) suggested that more work is needed to understand the process by which social structure creates cultural competence in individuals. He suggested that studying sociability might be a way to understand the effects of differential distribution of cultural capital across the social structure.

In the session on Popular Culture and Communication, the panelists critiqued cultural and media studies and debated the legitimacy of studying popular culture. For Ron Jacobs (Albany), cultural studies scholars recognize the “serious consequences of the popular,” but their work is isolated and insular. This prevents them from making important connections—for instance, between popular culture and political discourse. Laura Grindstaff (UC-Davis) argued that “thicker trading zones” do not exist because these disciplines fight to control popular culture as their own exclusive reserve. Jennifer Lena (Vanderbilt), meanwhile, tracked implicit normative trends that hamper the study of popular music by closing all but “real music” genres off to inquiry. The panelists agreed that studying popular culture might be “risky business” for young sociologists; however, the criticism that “popular culture is a trivial topic” is not legitimate. In fact, as Grindstaff argued, sociologists are only now becoming aware of how important popular culture is to the conventional concerns of the discipline.

In the section on Culture and Politics, panelists focused on the added value of cultural approaches to politics. Mabel Berezin (Cornell) suggested recognizing and analyzing the “it”-ness of people or ideas. Second, she promoted the “analytic power of thick description,” an approach explained as a mix of Geertz and Sewell. Andrew Perrin (North Carolina) introduced a series of images that represented different cultural meanings of voting and outlined four such meanings: 1) voting as expression of struggle; 2) voting as shopping; 3) purity of self; and 4) belonging. All of this, he argued, is ignored by

the traditional rational choice model of voting favored by political scientists and economists. Brian Steensland (Indiana) suggested a meta-approach for studying politics and culture, outlining three separate modes of inquiry: 1) culture as an additional explanatory factor or mechanism; 2) re-orient research towards cultural processes/outcomes; and 3) the cultural constitution of existing perspectives. While much of the work in culture and politics follows mode 2, he suggested that we should move towards the others, the purposes of which are to produce research intended to convince culture skeptics and provide warrant to measure culture as an outcome.

The topical sessions in the afternoon focused on Culture and Economy, the Arts and Humanities, and Culture and History. The theme connecting the panelists’ talks at the Culture and Economy workshop was the manner in which “the social” interferes with a rational understanding of economic life. Mary Blair-Loy (UC—San Diego) discussed her interest in the cultural underpinnings of firms’ behavior and her recent findings that a “work devotion” logic discourages employers from creating highly-paid part-time positions at the core of the organization. Fred Wherry (Michigan) shared findings that illustrate the socially-oriented and socially-constructed nature of demand, such that demand cannot be understood without an examination of its context. Kieran Healy (Duke) discussed one of sociology’s “Big Others”—economics—and the relationship between cultural analysis and economic analysis. Although they approach social phenomena with different assumptions, both find that their own approaches only partially explain social behavior, and they should probably admit the contribution the other makes to their own research.

During the session on Culture and History, panelists John R. Hall (UC-Davis), Jason Kaufman (Harvard), and Genevieve Zubrzycki (Michigan) discussed what the relationship between culture and history should be. For Hall, cultural sociologists are better at recognizing that “history is the story that is told about the past, not the story that is true.” The meaning of the past is an open question and itself a social process to be understood. Similarly, Kaufman argued that it is not facts that survive in sociology, but well-told stories that resonate with audiences. This is especially true in history where interpretation extends all the way down, and good writing makes good work. Zubrzycki, meanwhile, argued that “history is culture’s conjoined twin.” Cultural sociologists must recognize that interpretations of the past determine the meaning of the present. The panelists agreed that cultural sociology’s approach to history is an exercise in theory. Where comparative-historical sociology parses the complexity of history through method, cultural sociology does so according to what is interesting to know.

In the Session on Arts and Humanities, Priscilla Ferguson (Columbia), Robin Wagner-Pacifici (Swarthmore), and Victoria Johnson

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Hironaka emphasized the important role that institutions play in creating and enforcing the definitions of both crisis and the appropriate responses to crisis.

Peter Levin of Barnard College was the second panelist. He focused on market crises, specifically the sub-prime lending crisis, which was the result of institutional and technical infrastructure that allows risk, itself, to become a commodity. In an effort to avoid risk as much as possible, banks pool loans and then sell the bundled loans on the market to investors. What is being bought and sold is the risk associated with the loans being repaid by the debtors. Since risk can more reliably be calculated in aggregates, the loans are bundled, and then percentages of each bundle can be sold separately to multiple investors without any one investor's portion being tied to a single loan with a single debtor. It becomes an oxymoron: reliable risk. And it is everywhere, not just in mortgage loans, but in all types of investment arenas.

However, these structures of reliable risk also make the market vulnerable to crisis. Levin pointed to the way that markets which were previously isolated from one another are now linked and correlated. It is no longer the case that some markets deal in agricultural products, while other markets deal in real estate; now everyone is selling the same product: risk. This creates systematic risk. We no longer have crises in markets, instead we have crises of markets.

Sociologist David Pellow from the Ethnic Studies Department at the University of California, San Diego rounded out the afternoon panel with a provocative discussion of crisis as a social construction which reflects, sustains, and exacerbates existing social inequalities. Focusing on events here in the United States, Pellow elaborated the ways that crises are constructed and framed to benefit elites. He argued that crises, just like inequalities, are automatic outcomes of a market economy, yet they are disguised by language such as "natural disaster," even when they are triggered by human activity rather than nature. He termed such events "disasters by design," pointing to the reality that natural disasters in the United States have a much more devastating impact on already vulnerable populations such as racial/ethnic minorities, women, and the poor.

Pellow also acknowledged that the language of crisis is more effective at mobilizing citizen's hearts and efforts toward change—particularly vulnerable citizens—because it invokes the dream of creating a better world rather than reminding them of an imminent or already evident crisis situation of which they are already victims.

The momentum of the day's presentations culminated in the afternoon keynote address, given by Ann Swidler from the University of California, Berkeley. Swidler presented some of her current research on responses to AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa. She discussed, in particular, the question of why male circumcision has been "ignored, avoided, and disdained" as a prevention measure against AIDS, despite having reasonable levels of data which support its potential efficacy. This particular question serves as an example of

cultural and international frameworks for appropriate responses to crisis.

Institutions such as the World Health Organization, UNICEF, UNAIDS, and others are heavily mobilized in response to the AIDS crisis in sub-Saharan Africa, and exert a great deal of influence over whether and how potential AIDS interventions are selected. These organizations follow internationally shared logics about how to determine which techniques will be most effective. They favor pre-existing solutions that have strong success rates in clinical trials and similar field sites. They also tend toward individual thinking rather than population-oriented solutions. In this, Swidler emphasized that condoms are preferred over male circumcision because condoms theoretically give every individual the opportunity to absolutely protect him or herself. While male circumcision might reduce overall rates of HIV, it does not place the power of prevention directly in women's hands—a Western cultural ideal. Further, Swidler argued, due to a commitment to cultural sensitivity by institutional representatives, the "micropolitics of culture" affect the way in which various interventions are discussed. Specifically, who is in the room when a topic such as male circumcision is discussed has an impact on how it will be handled.

Swidler's talk concluded with a discussion of the ways in which cultural categories are projected onto responses to crises. She suggested that international health organizations rely on three fundamental beliefs which become imposed on the population receiving aid. One is a belief in a rational actor, and this creates the assumption that the best course of action is to educate people who are vulnerable to crisis to protect themselves. The second is a belief that people need to be mobilized to help themselves. The third is a belief that issues that matter for us also matter in the lives of the vulnerable population, issues such as empowering women, gay rights, and democratic participation. Swidler left the audience to consider the question of whether we, as First World international aid actors, are perhaps only interested in Africans as far as they allow us to project our social and moral imaginations onto them.

The conference addressed weighty concerns through a cultural lens, exploring the cultural boundaries in conceiving of crisis and emergency in our contemporary global era. The day's event was dedicated to Joe Gusfield, professor emeritus and founding member of the cultural legacy at UCSD.

The organizers are looking forward to the September 2008 special issue of *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, titled "Culture and Its Diversity," based largely upon the last three years' conferences.

The Fourth Annual UCSD Culture Conference was organized by Amy Binder, John Evans, Mary Blair-Loy, Kwai Ng, Andrew Lakoff, and Lisa Nunn. It was sponsored by the Department of Sociology and the Division of the Social Sciences at UCSD.

to bridge the “quality versus quantity” debate by engaging both dimensions in his innovative structural approach to narrative.

Other scholars in the series took more traditional, qualitative approaches to studying narrative, interpreting culture as text, and looking at the creation of new narratives. Based on a content analysis designed to inform his fieldwork in Nepal, Chudamani Basnet examined Nepal’s April Uprising, arguing that the key to mobilization for political change lay not in a decreased cost of participation, nor in a sudden opening of the political opportunity structure. Rather, he looked to the creation of a new narrative of citizenry called lokatantra. For nearly 60 years, Nepal functioned under prajatantra, or “subject-ocracy,” understood as Western liberal democracy. But shortly before the revolution, the new narrative of lokatantra emerged, meaning “folk-ocracy,” which Basnet argued served as a key symbol pushing the revolution forward. Extending such narratives of citizenry to a transnational analysis, Nichole Arnault examined the phenomenon and tactic of maternal protest. Based upon a secondary analysis of newspaper reports, organizational websites, and reports from transnational NGOs, Arnault argued actors strategically used a multifaceted narrative of motherhood in varying ways in different countries. Arnault’s research questioned why motherhood reoccurred as a narrative across contexts and sought to show the similarities and differences between motherhood as a frame, narrative, and identity in different countries.

Philip Lewin and J. Patrick Williams (Arkansas State University) also focused on narratives in their research. They investigated how actors spoke of their punk identities and how the quest for authentic selfhood oriented subcultural participation. From interviews with self-identified punks, Lewin and Williams found three main themes within the narrative of identity construction: an ideological commitment to critical thinking, a marginalization from peer groups, and a strong identification with punk music. Taking a more historical approach, Barry Schwartz investigated the narrative of one-ness and collective amnesia in the case of the Civil Rights movement and Rosa Parks through content analysis of newspaper and other archived media. He asked: Why did collective memory single her out while forgetting so many others? Schwartz acknowledged the NAACP strategically chose Parks for her clean-cut background and insider status in the movement, but argued that that alone could not explain the collective amnesia around other actors in the movement. Barry asserted that a combination of the Matthew Effect and humans’ cognitive miser brains limited what and whom we could remember, and that, in combination with Parks being chosen as a symbol, solidified her place in our collective memories and explains our collective amnesia about other actors.

In addition to narrative, many GCPH authors focused their research on symbolic boundaries, investigating the

creation, dissolution, and limits of such boundaries. Drawing on a theory of occupational community, Lynette Spillman (University of Notre Dame) looked at how workers created boundaries around their occupational communities as a way to explain the many solidaristic activities of American business associations. Generating data from public documents issued by 25 associations and a census of 4,465 national business associations, Spillman analyzed the solidarity and identity that people derive from work in an attempt to add a cultural dimension to our understanding of capitalist work. Workshop participants agreed we would never look at our ASA conference bags in the same way again. Elizabeth Cherry took a different approach to boundary work, looking at the process of symbolic boundary deconstruction. Based upon fieldwork with activists in France and the United States, Cherry investigated how animal rights activists attempt to deconstruct symbolic boundaries between humans and animals, arguing that such deconstruction exemplifies both a goal and a tactic of animal rights activists and of new social movements more broadly.

Abigail Richardson looked at the blurring of boundaries between “experts” and non- in healthy eating advice. In Richardson’s interviews with women about their eating habits, she found an increased skepticism of so-called experts by these women, who saw themselves as their own best experts on their health, and who thought there were too many “experts” giving contradictory advice on healthy eating. Finally, Rhys Williams (University of Cincinnati) investigated the boundaries of “legitimate” public discourse by looking at how Americans talk about collective life, how they represent our collective identity, and what goes into creating the “good society.” By analyzing public discourse in political cartoons, op-ed pieces, and comment threads on websites, Williams showed the boundaries of images of American identity such as “Lady Liberty” and “Uncle Sam” as they were used to comment upon contemporary issues of terrorism and immigration.

Though disparate in empirical focus and in methodology, each workshop meeting invaluablely contributed to the sociology of culture by encouraging, and thus deepening, thought on issues core to the field. Immediate and long term benefits of the workshop include the germination of critical thought, the extension of sociological knowledge, and a platform for future scholarship. For academics who often spend much of their time on specialized and independent research, spaces such as the GCPH provide a forum to actively exchange ideas and push new intellectual boundaries. Such activity maintains a diverse, evolving, and exciting field of inquiry.

We invite all Culture Section members living near or passing through the Athens / Atlanta to drop in on our sessions. Those further away but interested in downloading papers or keeping up with our activities can visit our website at www.uga.edu/gcph or join our low-traffic listserv.

(Michigan) outlined what they saw as cultural sociology's relationship to the humanities. Ferguson expounded on our mutual sensitivity to language and the significance of texts as well as the affective connection to our subject matter. Wagner-Pacifici offered two perspectives: that of a sociological humanities and a humanitarian sociology. In order to truly inhabit these trading zones, we must identify their nature. Johnson recounted her experiences trying to work in the trading zone between musicology and sociology, finding that no one wanted to "trade" with her because she asked questions that fell outside of the disciplinary borders of each group. However, ending on an optimistic note, she suggested that trading zones often represent a significant gap in the research because of untested disciplinary boundaries.

The closing plenary session offered further perspectives on the future of boundaries and trading zones in cultural sociology. Nicola Beisel (Northwestern) discussed her attempts at crossing boundaries in historical work. She shared her struggle with the conflict between her sociological focus on theory and history's "allergy" to theory. Despite this, Beisel reported that sociology's contribution to history comes from the application of theory in the service of solving puzzles within historical texts.

Incoming chair Mark Jacobs (George Mason) compared cultural sociology with cultural studies and asked what cultural sociology might learn from a "border crossing" with the "cult studs." Jacobs gave a brief history of cultural studies, from the Birmingham School to the program at George Mason. For Jacobs, the Birmingham School's distinction between ideology and culture is a precursor to cultural sociology's own "strong program" view. Furthermore, cultural studies remains committed to a critical theory redolent of Birmingham's founders. Cultural studies also encourages research on subjects neglected by cultural sociology, for instance television and the Internet. Finally, cultural studies supplements its findings with a reflexive understanding of its own practice. For Jacobs, these are among the "lessons to be learned" when cultural sociologists take cues from cultural studies, and he encouraged the section to be aware of its own closures and how they might limit cultural sociology's signal research program.

Jeffrey Alexander (Yale) argued that to understand power, culture needs relative autonomy: power can be used to make culture, but culture can be used to establish power. To illustrate this "strong program" view of culture, he analyzed political elections. He discussed the cultural construction of voters and candidates as central to campaigns. Candidates are best seen as collectively represented through rituals and performances. Successful candidates become mythic heroes. Campaigns, then, focus on controlling the candidate's image: candidates must remain unpolluted, with an aura of the sacred. Presidential campaigns are symbolic wars,

requiring candidates to differentiate themselves by presenting other candidates as dirty and themselves as pure. Though it seems "real," the political process is explained best by the ideal rather than the material or structural: it is a system of signifiers conveyed through performance, in which difference between candidates reigns supreme.

Michèle Lamont (Harvard) asked: how do we decide which dialogues to engage and which to avoid? Specifically, she highlighted the tension between cultural sociology and cultural anthropology. Within both disciplines there is a path-dependent process of attacking the other's "irrelevant questions" and engaging in boundary work in which one denounces the other because it is not "strong." Lamont argued that though we ask different questions, we ultimately want to know what makes a "successful" society. To this end, we must work in the trading zone, understand the difference institutions make, develop a cognitive platform in which we share criteria for valuation, and recognize when interdisciplinarity will work and when it won't.

Throughout the day, discussions revolved around three major themes. First, our subfield is rich with diversity. This can be strength because, as "bricoleurs," we draw from a variety of perspectives for our work. But do we need a shared core? If so, what should it be?

Second, have we convinced others that culture is important? Do we only want legitimacy, or to bring others to our side? Should we be satisfied when culture is added as a variable to an otherwise unchanged model? Most subfields don't care as much about theory, not to mention nuanced and complex arguments developed using thick description and textual analysis. They focus only on general statements and overviews of models. So how does writing for these audiences affect our own work?

Finally, work in the trading zone is liberating, but do people in these areas get tenure? More generally, while culture has become established within sociology, will we remain attractive without power over such practical matters? As Mary Douglas might suggest, our "unclassifiability" becomes a liability when confronting institutional norms that reward the kind of specialism "boundary crossing" works against. But how do we address this?

However, while the symposium acknowledged these real problems, the audience at the end of the afternoon plenary agreed that if there is a mainstream in sociology, it moves toward culture. The discussions, in and out of the organized sessions, certainly showed why. Since Geertz opened this report he might as well finish it: Boundary crossing can lead to "chronic elusiveness," but also "orchestral complexity and harmonic depth." We hope to continue this discussion next year in San Francisco, and move the section closer "in tune" with those "others" from whom we learn a great deal.

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Mary Douglas Book Prize 2008

Robin Wagner-Pacifci (chair); Gianpaolo Baiocchi;
Eva Illouz

Honorable Mention Recipients:

Paul McLean, The Art of the Network: Strategic Interaction and Patronage in Renaissance Florence

In analyzing hundreds of patronage letters sent by Renaissance Florentines to each other, *The Art of the Network* develops an innovative analysis integrating cultural and network theory. These letters constituted an important aspect of Florentine society – they assisted individuals in the achievement of security, mobility, and recognition. *The Art of the Network* demonstrates that culture is interactional, a means for relating to others. Thus, culture is revealed to be both a world we live in, and a tool we use strategically. The Art of the Network performs sophisticated historical archival work and expertly analyzes its primary documents to elaborate how systems of social, economic, and political networks emerged contemporaneously with transitional ideas about individuality on the road to a modern conception of the self.

Andrew Perrin, Citizen Speak: The Democratic Imagination in American Life

Citizen Speak demonstrates the importance of political micro-cultures (small groups of citizens within different kinds of civic organizations), on the ways that citizens debate politics in contemporary American society. Utilizing a sophisticated mix of methodologies - including focus groups discussing hypothetical scenarios, discourse analysis of talk, and statistical techniques – *Citizen Speak* illuminates the ways that people make political arguments and take political decisions - in context. It highlights the importance of context by drawing us into the micro-cultures of such diverse organizations as religious congregations, labor unions, business groups and sports clubs. The book underscores and expands the importance of thinking culturally about politics and civil society. *Citizen Speak* manages a significant feat - to penetrate the sociological mysteries of public action and public inaction, that is, to help us understand when and why individuals decide to take a stand and act.

Francesca Polletta, It Was Like a Fever: Storytelling in Protest and Politics

It was Like a Fever examines the roles of storytelling in diverse United States political settings: among protesters in the civil rights movement in the 1960s, in public deliberative forums established after the events of 9/11, among women seeking gender equality in courtrooms, and on the floors of Congress.

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2008 Suzanne Langer Student Paper Award

David Smilde, Committee Chair

The 2008 Suzanne Langer Student Paper Award committee consisted of Susan Pearce of East Carolina University, Paul Lopes of Colgate University and David Smilde of the University of Georgia. By our February deadline we received twenty-one electronic submissions. Our overall impression of this group of papers was amazement at the quality of the submissions. Fully a third of them were already published, and many of them would probably have been serious contenders in the general article competition.

As a committee we each spent the first six weeks reading the papers and individually choosing what we considered to be the top three papers. Merging each of our lists gave us five finalists which we considered more closely over the next month. We discussed these five by conference call in May and came up with our decision. It would be inaccurate for me to say that one paper clearly emerged at the top of the heap. All of these papers were impressive intellectual efforts. So those students who didn't win with published papers I would encourage them to try again next year. And I would encourage those students whose papers are unpublished to keep working on them and submit them again as well.

In the end we decided to honor two excellent papers working in a new old direction, an topic that has definitely been a central issue at different times in sociological history, but which is now making a resurgence: the sociology of morality.

Honorable Mention:

Stephen Vaisey, "Structure, Culture, and Community: The Search for Belonging in 50 Urban Communes." American Sociological Review

In this article Vaisey uses data from the 1970s urban communes project to show that shared moral order is the most proximate factor correlated with successfully creating community in the communes. If Vaisey had stopped there it would have been a good article. But what pushes this article into really notable territory is that Vaisey goes beyond this observation to uses fuzzy-set statistical techniques to further analyze the data and show that the most important story is the way culture and structure combine to inhibit or sustain community. It is really an exemplary multi-stage engagement of data and fine piece of sociological thinking.

Winner:

Gabriel Abend, "Two Main Problems in the Sociology of

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Morality," Theory and Society

Abend contrasts Weberian and Durkheimian paradigms for understanding morality. Weberian arguments generally assume that there is no moral truth and that we should therefore as scientists remain value free. Durkheimian arguments accept the possibility of moral truth and argue that we cannot be value neutral. Abend ends up disagreeing with the Weberian argument that there is no moral truth, saying an agnostic position is more appropriate. But he

then uses this to criticize the Durkheimian rejection of value freedom. He argues that while it is true that factual statements presuppose value judgments, it does not follow that empirical research can generate moral judgments.

At a time when the borders between sociology and theology, and sociology and moral philosophy are being challenged, this is an especially timely, provocative and thorough discussion.

Awards

Clifford Geertz Prize for Best Article

Wendy Griswold, Paul Lichterman, and Jeremy Straughn

The Geertz Prize committee, having reviewed the twenty-seven articles nominated, has awarded the prize to two articles. These are, in alphabetical order:

Lizardo, Omar. 2006. "How Cultural Tastes Shape Personal Networks." American Sociological Review 71: 778–807.

While a great deal of research has elucidated how social networks affect cultural tastes, Lizardo turns this around and asks, How do tastes shape networks? Working from a theoretical tripod of Bourdieu's theory of capital conversion, Carley and Mark's assumption of similarity (likelihood of social ties increases with cultural similarity) and DiMaggio and Fiske's identification of the arts and culture as a currency used to maintain sociability, Lizardo theorized that consumption of popular culture would promote weak ties among people while highbrow culture would be a vehicle for building strong ties. Using data from the 2002 General Social Survey, he tested the hypotheses that highbrow cultural tastes lead to denser networks of strong ties, and the popular culture tastes lead to a denser network of weak ties. Analysis of the data supported both hypotheses, leading to the conclusion the "culture consumption is the intervening mechanism that explains the often-noted association between high status and having large networks" (799). Popular culture consumption, but not highbrow consumption, has a positive effect on weak ties, so "popular culture is more useful [than highbrow] for maintenance of more fleeting, 'arm's-length' connections to others" (799).

Mizrachi, Nissim, Israel Drori, and Renee R. Anspach. 2007. "Repertoires of Trust: The Practice of Trust in a Multinational Organization amid Political Conflict." American Sociological Review 72:143–165.

How does trust work in a politically charged context

such as that of a multi-national production site where the managers are both colleagues and, at times, enemies? To address this question, Mizrachi, Drori, and Anspach conducted two years of ethnographic study—in Arabic, English, and Hebrew--of an Israeli textile company's Israeli and Jordanian managers working at three plants in Jordan. The study constituted a natural experiment in that it occurred during both a period of normalization of relations between Israel and the Arab world (1998 to 2000) and a period of conflict (late 2000 following the Intifada El-Aqsa [Palestinian Uprising]). They found that during the normalization period, "Jordanian managers relied on normative modes of trust, whereas Israelis used paternalistic and calculative strategies" (156). During the phase of political unrest this pattern reversed, with Israelis turning to normative trust relations (as one Israeli manager put it when talking about his Jordanian colleagues, "I trust them on the basis of our personal friendship, and I know that they won't let me down") while the Jordanians turned to calculative trust (as one put it, "We are working now according to the book"). Mizrachi, Drori, and Anspach found that the concept of knowledgeable agents drawing on "trust repertoires" explains the shifting dimensions of the trust relationships better than either a static cultural theory (whereby Jordanians were "premodern trusters" and Israelis "modern trusters") or a developmental theory (whereby Jordanians would use normative trust while Israelis would rely on calculative trust and the former would move toward the latter). Mizrachi, Drori and Anspach argue that trust has three dimensions: (1) Agency (the managers were active manipulators of the forms and symbols of trust), (2) Culture (the managers drew from complex repertoires rather than being bound by any strict set of cultural schemas), and (3) Political context (the political meaning of trust relations changed according to the context, and managers adjusted their behavior in light of the shifting situation).

With sustained attention to theory, *It Was Like a Fever* deploys sophisticated literary analysis, interviews, and regression analysis (among its several methods) in the service of a sociological approach to the social organization of storytelling. A fascinating finding of the book is that ambiguity in storytelling assists in the creation of political authority and the building of coalitions, but that storytelling also runs up against distinct political limits in its material effectiveness. In sum, *It Was Like a Fever* (as a nominating letter writer put it): “points to a new sociology of culture in which the focus is less on meaning than on the social distribution...of the capacity to mean effectively.”

Co-winners:

Jeffrey Alexander, The Civil Sphere

In the apt words of a nominating letter, *The Civil Sphere* develops... an analysis of one of the most critical issues of our times – civil inclusion and the Other. The book self-confidently, seamlessly, and successfully bridges history and theory with cultural analysis, and equally important – the empirical and the normative. *The Civil Sphere* challenges the all too prevalent ways that some sociological subfields have appropriated “culture” in recent decades as one more “variable” to consider. It does so through a cultural analysis, establishing a general sociological discursive arena in which sociologists can connect and debate the connections of diverse theoretical formulations with one another. *The Civil Sphere* draws on a base in cultural sociology to foster anew what once was the hallmark of American sociology in the work of scholars such as David Riesman, C. Wright Mills, and Daniel Bell – a form of analysis through which the general reading public can consider both the enduring and the pressing issues of societal organization for society as a whole. Alexander embraces an expansive, universalizing solidarity, but emphasizes the fragility of the social, reminding readers that the civil sphere is a project, never more than tenuously established, always subject to uncivil assaults, so long as “history” continues, inevitably beset with contradictions. *The Civil Sphere* is a book that awakens the best commitments to politics through the vehicle of cultural analysis.

George Steinmetz, The Devil’s Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa

A magisterial work of historical scholarship, *The Devil’s Handwriting* asks a critical comparativist cultural question: why did the same colonizing power act in radically different ways in different colonial settings? The book seeks to answer this question through an analysis that intercalibrates analytical

important, not less important, than the theoretical presuppositions of ‘cultural studies’ acknowledge” (1997, p. 393). In an analysis that anticipates the lessons of the Sokal affair, Schudson points out that Donna Haraway’s “Teddy Bear Patriarchy,” her celebrated deconstruction of the founding of the American Museum of Natural History, gets the basic history wrong, by conflating the liberalism of Franz Boas with the racism of the museum trustee Madison Grant. Completing the analogy with the Sokal affair, what most disturbs Schudson is not just the fatal flaw in Haraway’s argument, but the ready and unchallenged acceptance of that argument by the community of cultural studies scholars who share her ideological position. Beyond the lack of scholarly “discipline,” and despite their considerable sympathy for the project of cultural studies, Goodwin and Wolff (1997) similarly complain that cultural studies practices a reductionism that erases theories of aesthetics and poetics and abandons issues of the public sphere.

Venturing Into the Trading Zone

It is hard to avoid the conclusion, then, that cultural studies (at least in its Birmingham stream) is a relatively closed system of thought: politicized, ideological, reductive, anti-empirical, in-disciplined. How, then, to return to Lyn Spillman’s question, are sociologists to enter the “trading zone” between cultural studies and cultural sociology? Almost a decade ago, I argued in this newsletter (drawing on the work of Richard McKeon, Don Levine, and Walter Watson) that identifying the most fundamental differences of semantic presuppositions—“architectonic” variations of voice, intention, and method, for example, whose combinations result in such distinct intellectual orientations as atomism, pragmatism, structuralism, and poststructuralism—could promote dialogue among proponents of those divergent orientations. Fully engaging dialogue, however, also presupposes an acceptance of McKeon’s principle of “reciprocal priority”—recognition that in the abstract (though not in respect to particular research problems), all of those orientations are equally valuable, and that each can subsume all of the others within its own terms. Pragmatists accept this principle; poststructuralists do not. Pragmatists therefore strive to understand—in the others’ terms—why they do not. That is the beauty of the “trading zone” metaphor; it assumes that dialogue need not be fully engaged to be beneficial. In effect the cultural studies program at George Mason now functions as a trading zone, which is a more realistic model for such a program.

Cultural sociologists cannot expect to trade ideas on even terms with practitioners of doctrinaire cultural studies. Between cultural sociology and cultural

chapters on precolonial European ethnographies with chapters on German colonial policy in the three geographical contexts. Armed with the theoretical insights of Bourdieu and Lacan and steeped in archival research, *The Devil's Handwriting* explores the forms and consequences of symbolic and imaginary identifications across the colonial boundaries in the material practices of colonial officials. Importantly, this masterful study demonstrates that native policymaking on the parts of German colonialists was “directed not only toward the colonized but was intended to signal something to other Germans, both at home and in the colony.” Thus, ethnographic acuity is revealed to be a critical element in imperial self-understanding – much more than an epistemological supplement to justify colonial rule. *The Devil's Handwriting* highlights the constitutive work of culture as the book demonstrates that “the ‘hard’ structures of colonial states, economies, and societies are shaped by and consubstantial with ethnographic discourses, symbolic struggles among the colonizers, and psychic identifications across the colonial boundary.”

studies there will be more take than give. That's unfortunate, but no matter; we have plenty to learn from them. Ultimately, according to the principle of reciprocal priority, we engage in dialogue primarily to enlighten and refine our own position, rather than to win over the other. In my own research, cultural studies foregrounds the play of bad faith, which pragmatism tends to obscure. Cultural studies inspires sociologists like Charles Lemert to explore the legacy of sociology's “dark secret”—the colonialism and racism prevalent at the discipline's founding. In a spirit of full openness—we should bring those and other inquiries back into our discipline.

Works cited and further readings are available at <http://www.ibiblio.org/culture/newsletter>.

Diversions

Culture Jumble

Katherine McFarland, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
 kmcfarla@email.unc.edu

Directions: Unscramble these cultural words. The circled letters will then form a phrase. Send answers by email to culture@ibiblio.org; one lucky winner will be drawn from among all correct answers received by December 15, 2008, to win a \$10 gift certificate from amazon.com.

BSUTAH I	<input type="checkbox"/>
UEBROUID	<input type="checkbox"/>
GYCNAE	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
ETRAPCCI	<input type="checkbox"/>
SGOIOBEGU	<input type="checkbox"/>
TSEAT	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

It's the most confusing definition in sociology:

A	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	STRUCTURE