Message from the Chair

Culture and Cognition at the Intersections

Karen A. Cerulo, Rutgers University

How do we make decisions about right versus wrong … or assess someone's truthfulness? What explains our cravings for chocolate, cigarettes, or fine red wine … or whether our lifetime memories are clear or cloudy? And just how do we weigh all available options when buying a home, grading a student, or analyzing personal health options? These questions, of course, are all about cognition, a topic that in recent years has become all the rage. Journalists at the New York Times, Newsweek, and Science, media icons like Bill Moyers, Robert Winston – even Oprah – have been pondering such issues, and they believe they have found all the necessary answers. These inquiring minds consulted cognitive neuroscientists on the matter, and were told quite definitively that the "hows" and "whys" of what we do are all in the brain.

The brain is hot … and cognitive neuroscientists have it. These specialists want to teach us about it – even help us tour the brain via fMRIs, PET scans, and other "tangible" images. Who are these cognitive neuroscientists? They come from an exploding discipline that resulted from a long resisted intellectual marriage between neuroscientists (who typically focus on the brain's physical mechanisms) and psychologists (who generally prefer to study the functions of the mind). It took quite some time, but they are together now –listening to subjects, gazing at their fMRIs, and happily probing the "mindful" aspects of the brain such as attention, perception, classification, decision making, reasoning, remembering, morality, and emotion.

What's wrong with this picture? Attention, perception, classification, decision making, reasoning, remembering, morality, and emotion – these are topics that cultural and cognitive sociologists have been studying for years as well. So why aren't sociological explanations of these processes part of this burgeoning discourse? Were sociologists painfully rejected by the bride or the groom of the cognitive neuroscience marriage … or did they choose not to enter the courtship? In this essay, and those in future issues of the Culture Newsletter, I will explore that question, addressing the place of sociologists in this dialogue, and reviewing what we have done thus far and what remains to be done. I do so with an eye toward better positioning ourselves at

Department Feature

Far Above Cayuga's Waters: Cultural Sociology at Cornell

Mabel Berezin, Sociology, Cornell

Cornell University's Web Page proudly reminds potential students and random web surfers that the motto of its founder, Ezra Cornell was "any person, any study." In an age of academic hyper-specialization, this paean to intellectual eclecticism stands out. Ezra Cornell's injunction calls for interdisciplinary academic inquiry. The flourishing of cultural sociology in a department that is known mainly for other specialties is an unintended consequence of Cornell's institutional culture

I am the only person in the sociology department that formally identifies as a cultural and historical sociologist. Richard Swedberg, another department member, identifies as a historically grounded social theorist. This has provided a sufficient critical mass to reach out to the large number of like minded scholars in the humanities and social sciences who are eager to collaborate with sociology faculty and graduate students.

I divide the remainder of this essay into two sections: First, I will describe some of the interdisciplinary collaborations that have occurred and are possible at Cornell that contribute to the field of cultural sociology; second, I will provide a sampling of some of our dissertations in progress that draw upon cultural sociology.

Interdisciplinary Collaboration

Cornell has an amazing array of sociologically and culturally minded scholars. I name just a few here: Dominick La Capra in history: Susan Buck-

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this important intersection of knowledge.1

Sociology and Cognition

Cognition has been a persistent theme in sociological theory. Manheim, for example, wrote prolifically on cognition, urging us to study it as a relational phenomenon – a product of multiple perspectives that traverse space and time. Decades later, Berger and Luckmann made cognition the centerpiece of their social constructionist theory, arguing that conscious thought was the very engine of society. Aaron Cicourel, too, worked for years to bring cognition into the study of micro interaction, for he believed that such patterned exchange was best studied and understood by attending to cognitive elements – especially linguistic principles. And in recent years, Eviatar Zerubavel has emphasized the cultural aspects of cognition, examining thought processes relative to the broad cultural contexts in which they occur. Of course, some suggest that Pierre Bourdieu supercharged a "cognitive turn" in contemporary sociology, considering cognition as both "dependent" and "independent" variable. Bourdieu focused intently on the development of cognition via the "habitus". But he was equally enthusiastic about the contribution of habitus to the formation of broader social systems or "fields".

These scholars, and others like them, can be credited with establishing a sociology of the mind – a distinctive approach to understanding the sociocultural aspects of thought. To be sure, we have learned much from these ideas. At the same time, I suggest that this literature has produced an unintended consequence. The sociology of cognition has become overly insulated – a "gated" intellectual community. Many attempt to explain this insulation (DiMaggio 1997; Cerulo 2002; Bergesen 2004a; 2004b); others to justify it (see e.g. Zerubavel 1997; Button 2008; Coulter 2008). But justified or not, the effects of this insulation are clear. While psychologists, anthropologists, neuroscientists, political scientists, and even economists have joined in lively dialog, sociologists seem to be clinging to the sidelines, honoring – and in some cases strengthening – rigid intellectual boundaries.

There is, however, a growing exception to this pattern. In 1997, Paul DiMaggio jump started a new agenda, urging sociologists to take a fresh look at cognitive neuroscience. "Cognitivists," wrote DiMaggio, "have developed ingenious empirical techniques that permit strong inferences about mental structures, going far toward closing the observability gap between external and subjective aspects of culture" (1997: 266). Others joined DiMaggio in making impassioned pleas for disciplinary cross talk (see e.g. Cerulo 1995a; 1995b; 1998; 2002; 2006; Massey 2002; Howard and Renfrow 2003; Bergesen 2004a; 2004b; Brubaker, Loveman, and Stamatov 2004; Wuthnow 2007). The result has been an exciting line of research that promises to bring sociologists in full dialog with other scholars of the mind.

How will the dialog ensue? I argue that cognitive neuroscientists have presented us with a number of "stories" regarding the brain's role in thought: stories about neural paths and connections, the sites of addiction, emotion, and morality, the veracity of memories, etc. In many circles, these stories have been adopted as finished products. But such research is merely the first chapter of a broader, richer narrative – a narrative that sociologists are well suited to extend and, in some cases, complete.

For example …

Automatic versus Deliberate Cognition

Automatic versus deliberate cognition represent two cognitive styles studied extensively by cognitive neuroscientists. Automatic cognition involves rapid, effortless, unintentional thought: it allows us to quickly process information without extended review. The process is tied to the existence of "schemata" – knowledge structures such as stereotypes, scripts, etc. that, with broad strokes, represent the characteristics of people, places, objects or events and allow us to infer what these entities do, where they fit, and what to expect of them. Deliberate cognition involves a different neural experience: it refers to slow, considered, and measured thought. When engaged in deliberate thought, individuals may reject or override their schemas, and actively search for characteristics, connections, relations, and expectations rather than assuming them.

Cognitive neuroscientists have explored some of the conditions under which automatic cognition might dominate deliberate cognition and vice- versa. For example, automatic cognition can occur outside of consciousness while deliberate thought demands consciousness: automatic cognition is more likely to occur when we are under stress: deliberate cognition can be triggered by the disruption of well established routines. (Solso, MacLin and Maclin 2005 nicely review such work.) But these findings simply begin the story of automatic and deliberate cognition. – a story that sociologists are well positioned to continue.

DiMaggio (1997: 272) suggested one possible trajectory here. Including these cognitive variations in our studies of cultural patterns and practices could help us better understand the ways in which culture enables or constrains, and the ways in which social action is simultaneously institutionalized and agentic. Acting directly on DiMaggio's suggestion, Karen Danna-Lynch (2007; 2009; 2010) incorporates automatic verses deliberate cognition in her analysis of social roles – specifically, the area of multiple role enactments. Danna-Lynch sets out to better understand what she calls the "chameleon

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factor" – i.e. peoples' ability to accommodate multiple social roles, and continually switch between them, without becoming incapacitated by a sense of confusion or a feeling of role conflict. While prior answers to this puzzle have focused primarily on behavior, Danna-Lynch brings cognition into the mix. In so doing, she re-creates the meaning of role performance to include four ideal types of role states – types based on the interaction of cognition (automatic versus deliberate) and behavior (automatic versus deliberate). Using data from 60 in-depth interviews with working parents in a variety of occupations, Danna-Lynch itemizes the cultural practices that, a) help people establish themselves in these role positions, and b) allow them to continually switch between them. This merger of cognitive research and sociological theory provides a new approach to role theory, one that presents roles as a product of both physical and mental space.

In another venue, Javier Auyero and Debora Swistun (2008; 2009a; 2009b) examined automatic versus deliberate cognition among individuals dealing with uncertainty and risk – specifically, the residents of an Argentine shantytown who were facing high levels of environmental pollutants. Auyero and Swistun addressed the processes and practices that sustained peoples' uncertainty as well as those that resulted in people's mis-assessments of environmentally driven risks. Of particular interest here are the authors' reflections on the links between cultural routines and cognitive styles. Auyero and Swistun argue that when polluters take care to avoid major disruptions to residents' daily routines (i.e. getting to work, getting their children to school, preparing meals, etc.), the routines themselves encourage individuals to adopt an 'automatic pilot" approach to their surroundings. In essence, familiar routines combine with automatic cognition to restrict the deliberate attention to surrounding dangers; this process, in turn, suspends any initiatives toward organized actions against such dangers.

It is worth noting however, that levels of routinization must be considered when linking routines to cognitive styles. Carol Heimer's (2001) work illustrates the point. Heimer approaches routines as existing on what we might think of as a density continuum – i.e. situations vary from being abundantly or over-routinized to being scarcely or under-routinized. Heimer examines the conditions represented on this continuum, arguing that over or under routinization beckons deliberate cognition while moderate routinization is more strongly associated with automatic cognition. According to Heimer, over routinization triggers deliberate cognition because "people are so overloaded with routines that routines become noise rather than signal and cease to focus attention" (2001: 72). In under routinized contexts, thought must be inductive, as people examine and re-

examine the evidence of novel scenarios.

Attending to the differences between automatic and deliberate cognition may also contribute to our understanding of people's cultural beliefs. John Martin and Matt Desmond (2010) explored this issue in the realm of politics. The authors argued that political beliefs are formed with reference to people's self-placement on the conservative-to-liberal ideological spectrum. Moreover, they argue that the strength of one's ideological beliefs can influence one's cognitive style. Martin and Desmond suggest that those with strong ideologies have "pre-organized the world so as to make effortless, efficient associations." These individuals hold more available schematic information than those with weak ideologies, and thus, are more likely to engage in automatic cognition and avoid deliberate cognition. Those with weak ideologies, in contrast, need to seek information from their social field in developing political positions. This action necessarily demands more deliberate styles of thought. (See Martin 2000; 2002; for related work, see Vaisey 2008a; 2008b; 2009.)

Concerns for automatic and deliberate cognition have also surfaced in works devoted to culturally situated communication tools. These scholars focus on the way communication tools trigger one style of cognition over the other. Rebecca Massengill (2008), for example, compared the world views generated by right to life versus faith based labor movements. Her research paid special attention to the strategic use of everyday metaphors. According to Massengill, movement leaders use everyday metaphors to generate automatic cognitions on moral worldviews. They do so because automatic cognition can direct the actions of individuals in ways that expedite leaders' goals. What makes this work sociologically important is Massengill's placement of the process in cultural context. She notes that the moral worldviews of those engaged in both right to life and faith based labor movements are more varied and more powerfully linked to sociocultural context than many have assumed. This means that "not all metaphors can be invoked for particular instrumental uses with equal potency" (2008: 354). Rather, a metaphor's power to motivate behavior must be carefully situated in the cultural milieu of action. Easter (2008) makes a similar point in studying the political use of descriptive terms such as "freedom" and "liberty".

Rydgren (2007) examines another communication tool – analogies – and documents the ways in which they can trigger automatic memories. Rydgren is particularly interested in the cultural analogies that appear in discourse on ethnic conflict. Using the 1990s conflict between Croatians and Serbs as his research site, Rydgren argues that analogies, while often incorrect, were frequently used to

Books of Note
Timothy J. Dowd, Emory University

Many books have appeared since the last installment of "Books of Notes" column in the 2007 Newsletter. Rather than surveying all that would be of interest to cultural sociologists, I highlight but a few of those published in 2008 and 2009. Unfortunately, time and space constrain how many I can mention.

Three on Distinction

Tony Bennett, Mike Savage, Elizabeth Bortolaia Silva, Alan Warde, Modesto Gayo-Cal and David Wright. 2009. *Culture, Class, Distinction*. Routledge.
The authors consider carefully the arguments of Bourdieu regarding cultural capital, fields of consumption, and inequality – while also refining and re-assessing those arguments. Drawing on an impressive range of data in the UK (interviews, focus groups, survey), they examine how class, ethnicity and gender matter for such things as musical preference, appreciation of the visual arts, reading, eating and exercise. In short, they provide a compelling way to think about how tastes can translate into social distinction.

Marion Fourcade. 2009. *Economists and Societies: Discipline and Profession in the United States, Britain, and France, 1890s to 1990s.* Princeton University Press.
What passes for expertise and knowledge of distinction? It depends, Fourcade answers. In this innovative book she compares how different national contexts – which include political and cultural factors – resulted in somewhat different versions of economics in these three nations. Fourcade marshals both her argument and considerable evidence in an impressive fashion.

Michèle Lamont. 2009. *How Professors Think: Inside the Curious World of Academic Judgment.* Harvard University Press.
Lamont continues her fruitful examination of worth and worthiness – this time by turning her attention to the realm of academia. In particular, she examines how scholars in various disciplines define such distinctive qualities as "excellence" and "originality." Delving into the peer review process for fellowships and grants, she gains unusual access via observation of panels and via interviews with panelists. In showing how this evaluative process plays out for various disciplines, Lamont also offers the rare book that compellingly engages theoretical concerns while also offering pragmatic lessons for academics and their work.

Two on Creativity

Robert R. Faulkner and Howard S. Becker. 2009. "Do You Know...?"
The Jazz Repertoire

An Unbridgeable Gap
Barry Schwartz, University of Georgia

Footnotes' recent article on standards for evaluating qualitative research (July/August, 2009:4) triggered my memory of Charles Horton Cooley' private thoughts on the matter. Cooley's comments appear in the journals he kept during the early twentieth century (Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan), but they tell us much about our own time and about the methodological alternatives—and issues—that define and divide us.

Footnotes reports on an NSF committee's call for standards for the design and appraisal of qualitative research. No goal could be more relevant to students of culture, but the report is insensitive to both the resistance of qualitative talent to standardization and to the difficulty of cultivating such talent among students. Charles Horton Cooley, America's first great cultural psychologist, states the problem with force and clarity.

"Methodology," Cooley observes, "is a little like religion. It is something we need everyday, something we are irresistibly impelled to talk about, but regarding which we never seem to reach a definite conclusion." Cooley's analogy can be pushed further. If method is likened to religion, then sociology must have two sources of faith: one based on the quantitative method of what Cooley called "mensurative science;" another based on the qualitative method of "sympathetic understanding." For Cooley, these two methods lead us to two unique ways of understanding the world. The distinction, as Cooley articulates it, informs the NSF Report.

Quantitative researchers of Cooley's day, no less than our own, defined objective knowledge as replicable knowledge. As a former engineer, Cooley shared this conviction, but he never found objectivity to be a virtue of good sociology. When he announces that "the facts of sociology are facts of sympathetic insight that must be attained mainly by an open and watchful imagination," he gives voice to the inescapably personal nature of qualitative inquiry. Allowed free rein to their imaginations, Cooley feels, no two observers looking at the same thing can ever be expected to see the same thing. To those who take this disparity as an obstacle to the establishment of a science of sociology, Cooley offers no resistance. If sociologists fail to build up a cumulative body of knowledge, he explains, it is because "the dramatic and intuitive perceptions that underlie social knowledge are so individual, so subjective, that we cannot expect that men will be able to agree upon them or build them up into an increasing structure of truth." For Cooley, then, qualitative analysis is something less—and more—than the scientific method applied to nonquantifiable phenomena.

Culture

in Action. University of Chicago Press.
Drawing on their personal experience and on interviews with musicians, Faulkner and Becker offer a delightful examination of musical performance while, at the same time, revealing insights into the nature of collective action. They probe the skills and knowledge necessary for musicians to perform an impossibly vast range of songs – including when musicians do so on the spur of the moment with other musicians they've just met.

Katherine Giuffre. 2009. *Collective Creativity: Art and Society in the South Pacific.* Ashgate.
Art worlds – with their vague boundaries – can sometimes be sprawling entities that challenge ambitious researchers. Giuffre sidesteps this problem by dealing with an art world on the small island of Raratonga. Based on two years of participant observation and interviews with a full range of those involved in this art world (e.g., artists, gallery owners) – as well as a network analysis of artist connections – she is able to demonstrate how creativity unfolds in a small geographic setting that is shaped by such global processes as migration and tourism.

Four on Sports

Michael Ian Borer. 2009. *Faithful to Fenway: Believing in Boston, Baseball, and America's Most Beloved Ballpark.* New York University Press.
While readers may not agree with the designation of Fenway as the nation's "most beloved ballpark," they may well enjoy his interrogation of what goes on in this sporting venue. Taking both historical and contemporary views, he shows, among other things, how this place acquires both sacredness and authenticity for its city.

Scott N. Brooks. 2009. *Black Men Can't Shoot.* University of Chicago Press.
The title of this book – which plays on the film, White Men Can't Jump – cleverly hints at the focus of this ethnographic study set in Philadelphia. Brooks is concerned not with so-called natural abilities but with the sweat, toil, practice, etc. that are required for young African American men to become both excellent and known basketball players, as well as with the implications that being "known" holds for their social standing.

Reuben A. Bruford May. 2008. *Living through the Hoop: High School Basketball, Race, and the American Dream.* New York University Press.
May offers an engaging ethnography of basketball team in Georgia. It nicely shows the varied roles that basketball plays in the everyday lives of these young men – such as providing a focus that helps them negotiate disadvantaged neighborhoods and stoking aspirations for success as a professional athlete (no matter how unlikely the latter is).

Given the idiosyncrasy of the qualitative vision, scientific standards can never be applied to it. "The sooner we cease circumscribing and testing ourselves by the canons of physical and physiological science," insists Cooley, "the better." Instead, he invokes an intuitive criterion of merit. If one vision is to be preferred over another, the judgmental standard must acknowledge not only that vision's plausibility but also, if not mainly, the richness of its description, the subtlety and coherence of its message--in short, that pattern of qualities which, though not quite tangible, we nevertheless recognize and respond to. Expressing Cooley's conviction that sociology is more an art form than a science, this canon of judgement is unabashedly elitist: truth is discovered not by the application of standard procedures, which most can be taught to master, but by the personal insight of a gifted few. Correspondingly, the means by which such insights are attained can be imparted "only to the selected few who are fit to appreciate it." "Such a school as I would like to found," Cooley concludes, "would have few scholars."

Because qualitative research admits of no directly teachable methodology, qualitative methods courses can only be offered as electives, to be taken mainly by an aristocracy of talent. The more definite content of quantitative methods, on the other hand, can be offered in required courses for the mass of students. If a certain uniformity of vision is not the purpose of quantitative analysis, Cooley thought, it is certainly one of its consequences. Driving every mind along the same channel of inquiry, quantitative methods standardize outlook among those incapable of forming an outlook of their own.

Cooley's beliefs may be understood better if approached through the distinction between cultivation and training. Cultivation is concerned with the development of talent: the object of training is the development of skill. It is on talent, not skill, that qualitative methods make their heaviest demands. Cooley elucidates this idea when he confesses: "I have not been notably successful in 'organizing research.' That is, I have not developed a line of study wherein, under my direction, men of mediocre talents could achieve substantial results." By contrast, "a man with any real gift for research will provide the interest and the initiative himself, on some hint that he gets from study or observation, and will need only encouragement and guidance as to where to find what he wants." It is no surprise, therefore, that Cooley rejected most of his admiring graduate students, preferring undergraduate teaching to the supervision of theses and dissertations.

If Cooley fails to distinguish himself as a cultivator of talent, few of us do much better. The difficulties he associated with qualitative methods instruction still confuse and perplex us. One can quickly teach

Michael A. Messner. 2009. *It's All for the Kids: Gender, Families, and Youth Sports.* University of California Press.

Intrigued by quantitative data showing a dearth and marginalization of women coaches in, for instance, the American Youth Soccer Organization and Little League Baseball and Softball, Messner qualitatively examines how sex segregation plays out in youth-sporting leagues of South Pasadena. He shows, among other things, how contradictory notions in this community can shape segregation – including notions of sports as fun vs. competition and notions of boys and girls as deserving equal chances vs. being basically different.

Three on Place

David Grazian. 2008. *On the Make: The Hustle of Urban Nightlife.* University of Chicago Press.

In an earlier work, Grazian used the metaphor of "con game" to describe Chicago blues clubs – with club owners, civic boosters and others working together to fabricate an "authentic" experience that willing tourists gladly consumed. This metaphor – as well as the emphasis on collective fabrication – finds its way into this book, where he turns his attention to restaurants, clubs and other hotspots in Philadelphia. Whereas race was a prominent concern in his previous work (e.g., opportunities of black vs. white musicians), gender comes to the fore (e.g., harassment of women in these locales) in this illuminating ethnography.

Wendy Griswold. 2008. *Regionalism and the Reading Class*. University of Chicago Press.

Some fear that globalization and its attendant features (e.g., diffusion of new media technologies) have led to a decline in reading and an eclipsing of regional literatures. Griswold squarely takes on these fears and, based on her analysis of evidence in such places as Italy, Norway and the US, finds both overstated. On the one hand, while readership for leisure may be declining overall, a "reading class" that is educated, affluent and geographically mobile continues to exist and thrive. On the other hand, members of this mobile reading class can (and often do) become enamored with the regional literatures found in their new places of residence.

Silva Rief. 2009. *Club Cultures: Boundaries, Identities and Otherness.* Routledge.

Rief offers a wide-ranging, and theoretically ambitious, examination of clubs and clubbing in London and elsewhere. She situates things broadly by addressing the evolving regulatory and market contexts of clubs and nightlife, as well as by considering media and academic discourse surrounding dance and club cultures. Having set the stage, so to speak, she qualitatively investigates what goes on within club cultures, as well.

Three on Subcultures and Scenes

Tammy L. Anderson. 2009. *Rave Culture: The Alteration and Decline of a Philadelphia Music Scene.* Temple University Press.

While casting much-needed light on the trajectory of this music scene in Philadelphia, Anderson also grapples with how connections between personal and collective identity occur in scenes, how participants in scenes adapt and respond to forces of change, how developments in the Philadelphia scene compare to its counterparts in London and Ibizia, and what the future holds for electronic dance music. The longitudinal and comparative aspects of her book are especially appealing.

Paul Lopes. 2009. Demanding Respect: *The Evolution of the American Comic Book.* Temple University Press.

In this social history of comic books, Lopes continues themes from his earlier work on jazz (The Rise of the Jazz Art World). For instance, he addresses a subculture that embraces content (comic books) that is stigmatized and derided by others and, and he attends to the transformation by which this content is both mainstreamed and eventually viewed by some as "art." His analysis of discourse across the decades provides a nice complement to ethnographies of subcultures, while also offering broader lessons about stigma and legitimation.

Amy C. Wilkins. 2008. Wannabes, Goths, and Christians: The Boundaries of Sex, Style, and Status. University of Chicago Press.

Wilkins examines how young people use aspects of a given subculture to create identities and to navigate challenges that face them. Her examination is enlivened by a comparison of three disparate groups: "wannabes" – young white women who adopt lifestyle elements associated with local Puerto Rican hip-hoppers: "Goths" – those who favor such things as a dour appearance and disposition: and evangelical Christians on a secular college campus. The comparison works very well and, in the process, illuminates such things as the enactment of gender and the construction of boundaries between insiders and outsiders.

Three on Organizations

Katherine K. Chen. 2009. *Enabling Creative Chaos: The Organization Behind the Burning Man Event.* University of Chicago Press.

When thousands of people gather in the middle of the Nevada desert for a weeklong festival of the arts, organizational concerns will be both pressing and unusual. Chen offers a fascinating ethnography of the organization that enables this "Burning Man" to occur – an organization that has to deal with issues of community and commerce, and one that has to mobilize an army of volunteers while also confronting challenges of press coverage and

regulation.

Frank Dobbin. 2009. *Inventing Equal Opportunity.* Princeton University Press.

Dobbin examines the emergence and diffusion of equal opportunity practices that are now widespread among U.S. firms. These practices were not simply imposed upon firms, but instead, were driven along by the actions of personnel professional and experts, among others. Relying on extensive longitudinal evidence, he offers a convincing institutional account that heeds both agents and power.

Gaye Tuchman. 2009. *Wannabe U: Inside the Corporate University.* University of Chicago Press.

Tuchman brings the same eye and approach that worked so well in Making the News to the campus. Interviewing key professors in four departments that were apparently in turmoil – as well as drawing upon observation of university committees and the consideration of official pronouncements and journalistic coverage of Wan U – she adroitly lays out an ongoing change that is both eye-opening and familiar: the rising prominence of a market logic in the operation and evaluation of higher education.

Two on the Political

Michael Schudson. 2008. *Why Democracies Need an Unlovable Press.* Polity Press.

Schudson offers a series of essays that provide a historically-informed vantage by which to view current concerns regarding the vitality of democracy and journalism. As he notes in his introductory chapter, things are more complex than often thought. Fortunately, Schudson is adept at leading the reader through that complexity.

Amin Ghaziani. 2008. *The Dividends of Dissent: How Conflict and Culture Work in Lesbian and Gay Marches.* University of Chicago Press.

This book has one of my favorite opening lines: "People fight." From there, Ghaziani tells us how fighting – particularly in-fighting within social movements – can yield some positive returns. His cases here are four lesbian and gay marches on Washington DC (1979, 1987, 1993, and 2000) and the political organizing behind them. Not only substantively rich, this book also reveals how culture concretely works – such as how in-fighting figures in the construction of identity, of a "we-ness."

Six Others to Note

Eva Illouz. 2008. *Saving the Modern Soul: Therapy, Emotions, and the Culture of Self-Help.* University of California Press.

Paul Lichterman and C. Brady Potts, editors. 2009. *The Civic Life of American Religion.* Stanford University Press.

Chandra Mukerji. 2009. *Impossible Engineering: Technology and Territoriality on the Canal du Midi.* Princeton University Press.

Allison J. Pugh. 2009. *Longing and Belonging: Parents, Children, and Consumer Culture.* University of California Press.

Christian Smith. 2009. *Moral, Believing Animals: Human Personhood and Culture.* Oxford University Press.

Robert Wuthnow. 2009. *Boundless Faith: The Global Outreach of American Churches.* University of California Press.

students how to perform a significance test but not to capture the patterns in a non-numerical field. In every instance, violation of standard procedure is correctable: weakness of insight is not.

Qualitative observation remains a hopelessly private enterprise. Having at one's disposal the same data and using the same methods, one can replicate a survey directly. But after a year in the same Italian neighborhood in Boston or a Shetland resort hotel, one could never replicate the "findings" of Whyte and Goffman. Their model, after all, is not the laboratory worker taking reproducible measurements, but the literary artist or critic offering nonreproducible impressions.

Because of its heavy reliance on intuition and perceptiveness, one is bound to admit that if qualitative inquiry includes much of the best sociology has to offer, it also includes much, if not most, of the worst. Cooley's point is simply that qualitative observations resist technique. Their objects, it is true, allow for reliable coding, but penetration of their meaning requires the exercise of an intelligence which is, in important respects, non-methodical.

The contrasts just discussed—the speculative vs. the disciplined attitude, diversity vs. uniformity of vision, cultivation of talent vs.training, the unique vs. the replicable observation—are the elements Cooley uses to differentiate qualitative and quantitative thinking. Obviously, the first attributes in these pairs are not monopolized by qualitative sociologists: they also go into the making of good historians, philosophers, and literary scholars. What, then, can be said about the integrity of our discipline? Certainly a separatist faction in sociology favors the prospect of two intellectual cultures, one humanistic: the other, scientific. Cooley would have been sympathetic to this separatist cause, but it is sufficient for us, today, to recognize the issue itself, namely, whether or not the gap between quantitative and qualitative research, between two disciplinary cultures, is bridgeable.

Section Award Information

Mary Douglas Prize for Best Book

Section members, authors, or publishers may nominate books published in 2009 or 2010. Self-nominations are welcome. Authors must be members of the Culture Section. Send a nominating letter, including a description of the book and its significance, to each of the committee members. Also, please arrange for the book's publisher to send a copy of the book to each committee member. The deadline for nominations and receipt of books is February 15, 2010.
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Clifford Geertz Prize for Best Article

Section members may nominate articles and original chapters of edited collections published in 2008-2010, (but not pieces that have previously won a Culture Section award). Self-nominations are welcome. Authors must be members of the Culture Section. Send an electronic copy to each member of the prize committee. The deadline for nominations and receipt of articles is February 15, 2010
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Suzanne Langer Prize for Best Student Paper

Section members may nominate any work, (published or unpublished), written by someone who is a student at the time of submission. Self-nominations are welcome. Authors must be members of the Culture Section. This award includes a $300 prize to reimburse part of the cost of attending the 2009 ASA Annual Meeting. Send an electronic copy to each member of the prize committee. The deadline for nominations and receipt of articles is February 15, 2010
Committee Members

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Morss and Peter Katzenstein in Government; Hiro Miyazaki in Anthropology; Annelise Riles in Law and Anthropology; Trevor Pinch and Christine Leuenberger in Science and Technology Studies. Brett de Bary in Japanese Studies is one of the many sociologically minded members of the Comparative Literature Department. I have sat on search committees in Comparative Literature, am a member of French Studies and have given numerous talks on my work there.

The locale of these collaborations is often the AD White House, a Victorian mansion located in the center of the campus, that houses the Institute for the Study of the Humanities. The Institute and its social science friendly directors, Brett de Bary in the past and Timothy Murray currently, has hosted a wide range of cultural and sociological conferences and workshops. The number that I have participated in as a discussant or paper giver is too large to describe in a newsletter notice. These conferences have ranged from European identity to intellectual history and a range of subjects in-between. To give a flavor of these activities, I will simply note two conferences. Leslie Adelson, the Chair of the Program in German Studies, is a literary scholar who works on ethnicity and Turkish identity in Germany. In spring of 2009, she sponsored a workshop in collaboration with the University of Giessen on "Transnational Approaches to the Study of Culture." I helped Professor Adelson with the planning of the workshop and made sure that sociology graduate students were involved.(I of course gave a talk also!) The keynote speaker was George Steinmetz—a sociologist! A few years back, Richard Swedberg in collaboration with anthropologist, Hiro Miyazaki, organized a conference on "Hope in the Economy." Anthropologists, sociologists and historians from the United States and Japan theorized on the subject of hope for two days!

In addition, the Mellon Foundation has generously funded a series of faculty seminars at Cornell. In academic year 2005-06, I was selected for inclusion in a faculty group on "Culture and Value." A group of fifteen faculty from the various departments in Arts and Sciences met once a week for the entire year (the seminar included teaching relief!) and discussed our work. My recently published book, Illiberal Politics in Neoliberal Times (Cambridge 2009) benefited enormously form that seminar where I presented early versions of chapters and received vital feedback and constructive critique.

The Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies and Institute for European Studies is another important locale of interdisciplinary collaboration. My involvement with both institutes, as a member and former Chair of the Luigi Einaudi Committee has permitted me to bring European cultural and political sociologists to Cornell. The Einaudi Center also provides an important source of funding for our graduate students.

Graduate Student Dissertations.

Most exciting for me is to see the graduate student dissertations that are emerging from this interdisciplinary collaboration. I teach a graduate seminar on Cultural Sociology and one on Comparative Societal Analysis. In addition, I teach a large undergraduate lecture on Politics and Culture where my Teaching Assistants learn about nationalism, civil society and political ideology. Richard Swedberg teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in Classical Sociological Theory. The combination of formal courses and the interdisciplinary spirit at Cornell has yielded a series of exciting dissertations in process.

The graduate dissertations that I describe draw on economics, religion, law, organization theory, international relations and immigration studies. They traverse time and space: from ancient Rome to Korea and Japan to Ecuador to the contemporary United States!

Jared L. Peifer's dissertation entitled, "Between God and the Martket" seeks to show how religiously affiliated mutual funds bring together the religious and financial spheres. He draws on a host of archival materials on these funds plus a quantitative data set on mutual funds. In addition, Jared conducted in-depth interviews with 29 people that work at the religiously affiliated mutual funds. His respondents describe how they aimed to generate competitive return performance for their investors while abiding by religious principles. Screening out certain securities is believed to compromise return performance, creating a practical dilemma. Jared borrows the concept of symbolic spheres (Lamont and Molnar 2002) to analyze their responses. He also found significant cultural tension at the intersection of the dissonant spheres of religion and finance. Drawing on Zelizer (2005), he explore how fund actors are able to negotiate this cultural tension.

Laura Ford is exploring the role that legal culture plays in helping to shape economic change, particularly in relation to the emergence and expansion of "intellectual property." In her dissertation, Ford develops a theoretical concept that she labels as "semantic legal ordering." Ford argues that lawyers use conceptual categories that they have been taught to use in conceptualizing the legal system (e.g. property and contract) to make sense of economic developments and bring them within the purview of the legal system. In the case of western legal systems, thesecategories and their related legal principles derive from Roman law. By analogizing new economic developments to older economic

forms, as encompassed by these legal categories, jurists and lawyers help to bring stability and "order" to economic developments, at the same time that they may be creating new forms through which economic interests may manifest themselves.

Jung Mee Park's dissertation looks at the role of treaties in changing the norms of international relations in East Asia during the mid to late 19th century. At this time, China, Japan, and Korea were first exposed to Western style treaties which led to drastic internal changes in each nation. Most notably, Japan transitioned from the Tokugawa to the Meiji regime leading to a top down reformulation of ideology (from Confucianism to Shintoism) in the late 19th century. Her research looks at how new legal and international norms placed in East Asia produced different results in the domestic politics of China, Korea, and Japan.

Nicholas Eilbaum's dissertation is an ethnographic account of undocumented Ecuadorian immigrants in Queens. He combines interviews and participant observation to describe the life histories of migrants. He maps the narratives of migration that the migrants create to understand how they perceive their experience as outsiders. His rich ethnography connects the dots between social structures in the sending and receiving countries and links these structures to issues of migration and social mobility. Eilbaum explores the changes associated with undocumented migration—the insidious consequences of hiding, the experience of

downward mobility--all of which effect migrants who stay longer than they originally intended.

Matt Hoffberg examines the influence on organizational culture of interpersonal trust and reciprocity. In particular, he examines the tension between collectivist workgroup cultures that encourage self-sacrifice with the market instrumentality inherent in for-profit workplaces, and how this tension shapes employees perceptions of their co-workers. A concern with "authenticity" as a sociological concept motivates all of Hoffberg's work.

Alexa Yesukevich examines performances of social dissent through qualitative interviews with female rugby players. Many of the athletes that she interviewed aligned themselves with the larger movement for women's sports and think of their involvement in team contact sports as a form of feminist protest. She uses both the political process approach to social movements and Jane Mansbridge's concept of the everyday activist to ask when and how a female athlete might view playing rugby to be a feminist act. She explores ways that, through an informal and relatively private activity such as playing rugby, a woman can place her own life in a larger political context, invoke the support of others like her, and call for change.

In short, Cultural Sociology is alive and well at Cornell—a sign of the openness of the sociology department and the university—and the vibrancy of our sub-field!

explain and assess the conflict. The problem, argues Rydgren, is that such analogies typically triggered automatic memory biases. So, for example, when Croatians or Serbs witnessed elements reminiscent of past conflict, they engaged in analogic reasoning, assuming that past outcomes would simply repeat themselves. These automatic memory biases led people to overestimate the potential for future conflict. Such overestimations, in turn, precluded constructive peacemaking. Rydgren suggests that successful conflict resolution demands the injection of communication tools more actively associated with deliberate thought.

Communication sequences have also been linked to variable cognitive styles. In studying visual and verbal depictions of violence, I have discussed the role of message sequences in triggering automatic versus deliberate thought (Cerulo 1998). My work identifies four distinct temporal sequences that drive narrators' accounts of violence: victim sequences, performer sequences, contextual sequences, and doublecasting. I show that the narrators' sequence selections reflect institutionalized communication conventions based on assumptions of audience morality. But more importantly, I document that certain sequences seem to trigger automatic cognitive responses that lead readers and viewers to systematically judge the morality of violence. To be sure, this pattern was not universal, but therein rests the sociocultural dimension of the issue. Indeed, I identify several substantive and contextual elements that temper the decision-making process. (Altheide 2002; 2006 offers more on formats and their connection to cognitive styles.)

One can identify other works on this general topic. Ganz (2000), for example, writes on strategic capacity, social movements and deliberate cognition; Both Chiu et al. (2000) and Kosic et al (2004) write of the interaction between cultural traditions, individuals' need for closure, and the triggering of automatic cognition. And Daina Harvey (2010) takes discussion of automatic and deliberate cognition in a promising new direction, exploring the links between the configuration of social spaces and the ways in which these configurations trigger cognitive styles. He suggests that structured spaces tend to facilitate deliberative cognition while unstructured spaces promote automatic cognition. Harvey's development of these connections has important implications for how and, perhaps, why we use culture in the process of thought.

All of these studies represent exciting ways of developing cognitive neuroscience research on cognitive styles. The challenge for sociologists is to make the link between the firing synapses, neural paths, and the organization of the sociocultural contexts in which those processes occur.

Graded Membership

Cognitive neuroscientists tell us that some of the brain's standard processes are characterized by asymmetry. This is especially true for conceptualization. (Concepts, of course, are tools used by the brain to identify and organize people, places, objects and events.) Many cognitive neuroscientists believe that concepts are built on a prototype or a "best example" premise. Thus at their core, concepts amplify or exaggerate the critical features of a category: they focus our brains exclusively on a category's "ideal". When we encounter something, we use our mental concepts and perform a process called "graded membership" – i.e. we rank or locate entities with reference to others in their class. For example, when you go shopping for a tomato, your brain compares every tomato you see to an ideal prototype, and it works from there. The more attributes the tomato-in-hand shares with the prototype that exists in your brain, the more likely you are to include what you see in the category tomato and the closer you will rank that observation to the category's core ideal.[2]

Graded membership has obvious results for the way we evaluate the world around us. The process quite forcefully establishes asymmetry as one of the brain's prominent modus operandi. Best case examples of a concept are overemphasized and highly detailed: anything less than the ideal becomes increasingly nondescript, released or distanced by the brain from active consideration. But elsewhere, (Cerulo 2006), I have argued that graded membership has social implications as well. The process has much to do with a sociocultural phenomenon I calls positive asymmetry. Positive asymmetry is a blind optimism – a tunnel-vision directed to best case scenarios and an accompanying disregard for worst case scenarios. My work documents the widespread nature of this phenomenon, taking readers to diverse realms of everyday experience: life's most intimate relationships, key events in the life cycle, the many sites of work and play, and the organizations and bureaucracies that structure social life. Using a variety of data – i.e. interviews, fictional accounts, survey data, media reports, journalistic commentaries, observations, and official records – I illustrate the frequency with which individuals, groups, and communities blatantly disregard worst-case scenarios. While definitions of best and worst change from time to time and place to place, I show that the tendency to prioritize the best is rather constant.

Why is positive asymmetry connected to the brain? After all, the brain has prototypes for bad things or worst cases too—i.e. the perfect storm, the prototypical murder. So why do I argue that graded membership and the asymmetry it involves have anything to do with a cultural emphasis of best

cases? Here is another instance in which sociology allows us to continue and enhance the cognitive neuroscience story. We can map the ways in which society and culture transform and reconstruct the neural processes of the brain.

Cognition does not occur in a vacuum. The concepts and categories foregrounded in one's mental "data banks" differ with reference to the cultural repertoire of one's group or community. This foregrounding can be linked to a variety of factors, including a community's survival needs, its goals and values, its relative station in the broader society, its internal power structure, etc. But regardless of the source, the priorities defined by a group or community's culture become institutionalized in the community members' shared stock of knowledge – or for Bourdieu, the habitus. Different communities prioritize and attend to different categories of people, places, objects and events. Indeed, in most communities, cultural practices are at work, practices that, in essence, background half of what is in our brain, (e.g. the materials dealing with worst case or negative concepts). These practices harness the brain's propensity toward asymmetrical thinking: they harness the mechanic – the way we think – and they encode that process into a much more targeted and specialized experiential bias. Asymmetry – the tendency to emphasize only the best-case example of any concept, is transformed to positive asymmetry – the tendency to emphasize only examples of the best-quality cases.

What are these cultural practices that so bias our perceptions? I have identified three sets of practices that function in this regard: eclipsing, clouding, and recasting. I also have identified certain structural conditions under which these practices are more or less effective. In so doing, my works seeks a productive cognitive science/cognitive sociology merger. In step one, we learn something about how the brain operates. In step two we learn something about how social and cultural practices compliment, alter, or elaborate that neural process. (For related work, see Armstrong 2003; Freudenberg and Alario 2007; Senier 2008; also consider works on commensuration, i.e. Purcell, 1996; Espeland and Stevens 1998; Zuckerman 2004).

In my next essay, I will highlight more cognitive science "stories" and discuss the fruitful ways in which some sociologists are continuing them. I'll conclude my trilogy of essays with some ideas on what cognition really means for sociologists.

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