SECTIONCULTURE

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Culture Section,

It has now been several months since our annual conference. The semester is well underway, and we are all very busy with our teaching and research. But I look back fondly at the five days we had in Montreal, thinking about culture in one of North America's most beautiful cities. I enjoyed my walk down the hill every morning to the Palais des Congres, and I enjoyed my excursions into the city. Above all, though, I enjoyed my time inside the conference venue, talking with my colleagues and listening to dozens of fascinating papers.

We had a very active group of culture sessions for this year's conference. In total, we were able to organize or co-organize nine sessions. This included a graduate professional workshop, which preceded the section business meeting; and a full-length roundtable session, with 15 concurrent panels. Two of the sessions were co-sponsored, one with the section on the Sociology of Religion and the other with the section on Global and Transnational Sociology. All of the sessions were well-attended, with a few of them standing-room only.

Two sessions stood out to me as being particularly timely and exciting. The first was an invited session on the 2016 Presidential election. Despite all that has been written about the election and its

aftermath, these four paper showed what a distinctive, original, and

important perspective cultural sociology can bring to pressing social issues. Phil Gorski talked about why white evangelicals were drawn to Trump, despite the fact that he was not religiously observant and despite the fact that much of his behavior violated their normative expectations. The attraction, Gorski argued, was located in the deeply apocalyptic structure of Trumpian political rhetoric, which recalled an earlier version of religious nationalism while stripping that discourse of any explicit scriptural references.

Mabel Berezin asked how Trump could manage to declare that he "loved the poorly educated" in a way that increased their attraction to him without appearing condescending. For Berezin, Trump's political attractiveness was connected to specific cultural elements of his biographical self-presentation: his connection to Queens, his celebrity, his emphasis on doing and building, and his emphasis on physicality and materiality. Robin Wagner-Pacifici and Iddo Tavory emphasized the "event-ness" of the electoral campaign. Showing how the Trump campaign was designed to continually create a rupture from the ordinary, they argued that the temporality that Trump evoked had the effect of creating a series of charismatic moments for a segment of the population desperately searching for meaning and transcendence.

In the last paper, Francesca Polletta and Jessica Callahan showed how the dynamics of collective storytelling do not have to be connected to tests of plausibility, and how this was connected to Trump's victory. In a digital world dominated by user-generated Internet forums, they argued, the very act of sharing stories becomes the thing that reinforces the identity and the solidarity of the group. The truth of the story is beside the point, when sharing a new rumor becomes a piece of "conversational capital." All four of these papers appear in a special issue on the Presidential election, published in the *American Journal of Cultural Sociology*.

The second session that stood out to me was an invited session that David Smilde organized, on the topic of "public cultural sociology". Five panelists – Abigail Saguy, Mary Blair-Loy, Fred Wherry, Orlando Patterson, and David Smilde – told stories about their experiences doing public cultural sociology in a variety of public settings, including newspaper op-ed columns, interviews with journalists, television appearances, blogs, and testimony before Congressional committees. The panelists made a case for why (and when) it was a good idea to invest energy and resources trying to reach a wider public. They told stories about the special insight that cultural sociology can provide for public debate and public policy discussions. And they offered suggestions about how to be effective in the attempt to do more public work.

Culture is entering an important moment within the discipline of sociology. The days are mostly gone where we need to spend large portions of our articles and books making the case for why culture matters. We seem to have convinced most of our colleagues from other specialty areas. And besides, any glance at the newspaper or the television drives this point home on a daily basis. We can now go about the business of honing our craft, pursuing our research, and sharing our results with the scholarly community and the larger public. The ensemble of papers presented in our nine sessions showed clearly that there is a lot of fantastic work being done by members of our section. We look forward to continuing to share and publicize this work, in our newsletter as well as our future conference programs. I am excited to lend my voice to this effort.

I would like to end by thanking our outgoing chair, Jennifer Lena, who has been a source of continual help and inspiration in her leadership of the section. I am gratified to know that she is so generous with her time, and it is a source of great reassurance to know that she is just a quick email away. I have already had the pleasure to begin working with our chair-elect, Omar Lizardo, and I look forward to the program that he is planning for our meetings next year in Philadelphia. I would like once again to thank the people who helped me to organize the panels for our Montreal

meetings: David Smilde, Matthias Revers, Peggy Somers, Lyn Spillman, Andrea Press, Gemma Mangione, Hannah Wohl, and Jeff Guhin. Special thanks to Brian McKernan and Hannah Wohl, who organized the roundtables for the section. I would also like to thank the editors of *Cultural Sociology,* who sponsored our reception at the Montreal meetings. And I thank all the members of the Culture Section, who have made this such an inviting and inspirational intellectual home for me in the twenty-five years I have been a member.

Ron Jacobs,
University at Albany, SUNY

LETTER FROM NEW EDITORS

Dear Culture Section,

Greetings from your new newsletter editors, Hillary Angelo (UC, Santa Cruz), Diana Graizbord (Univ. of Georgia), and Michael Rodríguez-Muñiz (Northwestern University), as well as our new graduate student assistant, Dustin S. Stoltz (Univ. of Notre Dame). We're all looking forward to working on behalf of the section in the coming years, and wanted to take this opportunity to introduce ourselves and solicit your ideas and contributions for the issues ahead.

Thanks to the incredible efforts of Alexandra Kowalski, much of the newsletter will remain the same. Alex has provided several years of great content, including recaps of conference sessions and professional development events, virtual roundtables, department profiles, and interviews with scholars of culture, which will all continue. We also look forward to bringing you a new "From the Archives" section, which will bring back greatest hits from the culture newsletter archives.

Just to give you a taste of the year ahead; we will have three newsletter issues this year. This, the fall newsletter, includes recaps and reviews of culture panels at this year's ASA, as well as a letter from our new Chair, Ron Jacobs. The Winter/Spring newsletter will be published in March, and will include a series of essays

responding to the new book *Social Theory Now,* co-edited by Claudio E. Benzecry, Monika Krause, and Isaac Ariail Reed (University of Chicago Press). In late June, the Spring/Summer newsletter will include a set of reflections on the cultural sociology of W.E.B. Du Bois, inspired, in part, by Aldon Morris' recent book of *The Scholar Denied* (University of California Press).

We welcome your ideas and contributions for future issues. Please contact us with suggestions for essays, book reviews, symposia, reports on conference panels, etc.—or just themes or topics you'd like to see covered in the newsletter. Graduate students are especially welcome to be involved and be in touch.

Best wishes for the rest of the fall semester,

Hillary, Diana, and Michael

CULTURE SECTION OFFICERS

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Univ. at Albany, SUNY 2017

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Univ. of Notre Dame 2017

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Columbia University, Teacher's College 2017

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Gemma Mangione,
Northwestern University 2018

Conference Reports

American Sociological Association Meeting,
Montréal, QC, Aug. 12-15, 2017

From Dissertation to First Book
Hannah Wohl & Gemma Mangione,
Northwestern University

The *Culture Section Professionalization Workshop* is an annual ASA session that provides graduate students and junior faculty with professional development resources relating to academic writing, publishing, and career opportunities. For ASA 2017, we organized "From Dissertation to First Book," featuring two recent first book authors (Michaela DeSoucey and Terry McDonnell), a university press series editor (Jenn Lena), and a university press editor (Eric Schwartz). Panelists were asked to share their advice on writing and publishing first academic books. For those who could not attend the workshop, we have included summary comments from our panelists, edited for length and clarity.

Michaela DeSoucey, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, North Carolina State: My presentation discussed my research timeline, book contract process, and manuscript writing advice. First, accept that the whole thing will take much longer than anticipated. The job market (4 years before landing a tenure-track job); multiple moves (for myself and an academic spouse); and a new baby all interfered with the time and mental bandwidth necessary for my book writing. Most academics I know have faced something(s) in their lives that has slowed down their work. Second, I wanted an advance book contract for the job market (and it helped me). So I really spent a lot of time working on my prospectus, including developing very detailed chapter descriptions. The 'backstage' work included an ever-evolving file called "What The Heck Is This Book About?" Third, some general advice: cultural sociologists often work on "quirky" topics. Be thoughtful about articulating why other sociologists should care. Also, an ethnographic monograph needs an interesting

story. As my first editor advised me: "Don't be boring." Finally, be open to the manuscript changing. Almost none of the sentences in the book are from my dissertation. After receiving reviewer comments, I dropped a chapter. A friend told me her chapter order changed three times. A book is like an iceberg: 10 percent shows above the water's surface, with 90 percent supporting the invisible data and analysis beneath.

Culture Section Council
Elizabeth A. Armstrong,
University of Michigan 2019

Aneesh Aneesh,
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee 2019

Francesco Duina,
Bates College & Univ. of British Columbia 2018

Shyon S. Baumann,
University of Toronto 2017

Terence E. McDonnell,
University of Notre Dame 2018

Lauren Rivera,
Northwestern University 2017

Kelly Balistreri,
Bowling Green State University 2018

Terence E. McDonnell, Kellogg Associate Professor of Sociology, University of Notre Dame: First, speak with book editors early in the process. I drafted a book proposal before talking with an editor, and editors weren't interested. After speaking with editors, I learned where their enthusiasm lay, which would have improved my proposal and the chance of an early contract. Second, pursue the book you want to write. I initially pitched a book that I thought would reach the widest possible audience, focused on public health, but buried the idea of "cultural entropy":

the idea I was most passionate about. Conversations with editors made clear that cultural entropy was the book's central idea. Third, take time to get the argument right. Not securing an early contract was a blessing in disguise. I had time to develop my ideas without a looming deadline. Fourth, if a press says no at first, you can always go back. My press initially passed on the project. I asked them to reconsider when the book was reframed around cultural entropy. Fifth, send the manuscript to multiple presses. Ethically, tell editors when you do this. That said, when on the tenure clock, with a full manuscript in hand and without a contract, protect your interests by asking presses to compete. That way disruptions in the review process at one press won't delay the timely publication of your work.

Jennifer C. Lena, Associate Professor and Program Director of Arts Administration, Teachers College at Columbia University; Co-Editor, Culture and Economic Life Series, Stanford University Press: First, look for "fit" within a publisher's list. You can start with the imprint of the books you rely on in your own work. Also take a look at the editorial board. Ensure there are two or three board members that could be advocates for your work; at least one series board member typically serves as a blind reviewer for any proposal. Your proposal should explain synergies between your proposed text and those the publisher has printed. Second, know there will be a range of editorial styles and publication rates across series. In some cases, like in my series, you will find "developmental" editors who will help revise proposals, comment on drafts, and write to the board to endorse publication. In other cases, series editors recommend reviewers and write the letter to the board. Further, in any year, a series may publish just one, or as many as six books. In some cases, submitting to a series thus lowers your odds of success. This is worth bearing in mind when deciding whether you want to sculpt your proposal around a series or compete in the open market of a publisher's main list. Finally, while publishers and reviewers generally strive to be fair in their decision-making, the process depends upon some informally transmitted knowledge. If

you know few people who have published books, reach beyond your network. Most of us are committed to mentoring authors and welcome you reaching out for help.

Eric I. Schwartz, Editorial Director, Columbia University Press: I spoke about how to publish in theory and practice, based on my experiences working in a university press: the non-profit scholarly publishing arm of a university or college. First, I discussed what such presses look for: an innovative take on a topic important to the field; good writing (write for the upper-level undergraduate); and a balance of commercial and scholarly considerations. Second, I also talked about what you need to know about your work when pitching your manuscript. You should be specific about your subject (who is the book for, and what is it about?), as well as your intent (why this book? what do you wish to accomplish?). You should be able to describe the essence of your book in one or two sentences. In general, well-written manuscripts have an established setting, characters, narrator, example of theory or new theory, connection to the canon, and a sense of how the book can be taught or incorporated into university curricula. Well-written proposals will have a brief description (one to two paragraphs); full description (one to two pages); proposed chapter outline; a discussion of the market (readership level and fields); competition (books for similar audiences); and specifications (length, illustrations, schedule, and the likelihood of multiple submissions). Finally, if you submit to multiple publishers, it's a good idea to let editors know.

Gender, Culture, Media

Arialle Kaye Crabtree,
University of Georgia

In a session entitled "Gender, Culture, Media," five scholars presented papers that addressed the intersection of media and culture. Organizer and presider, **Andrea Press** (University of Virginia) identified the question that unites the various studies: "Where is the influence?" In other words, which groups have the power to affect cultural shifts? Highlighting the role of consumers, producers, and gatekeepers the panel addressed the degree to which each of these actors is able to maintain or challenge gender difference and inequality in media.

Élodie Hommel (ENS de Lyon/Centre Max Weber) examined consumer patterns among French science fiction and fantasy novels. Based on interviews, she showed how readers' preferences deviate based on gender. Men were more likely than women to enjoy violence and select books that reference scientific theory. Women embraced romance as an engaging component of these novels and favored plots that utilize suspense or mystery. Hommel argues that these consumer preferences show the persistence of gender stereotypes, even as female readership increases in this previously male dominated science fiction genre.

Lorenzo Sabetta (Sapienza University of Rome) investigated the shifting meanings of "mother courage" in Italy. In Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1939), the term "mother courage" represented the terrors of war by depicting a mother who profits from warfare and sacrifices her own children in order to survive. Sabetta showed the "slippage" that occurred as this term was redefined by news and print media. Since the 1960s, "mother courage" has been used to describe self-sacrificing women who abide by cultural norms, maintain moral integrity, and protect their children in the face of extreme economic duress. Sabetta argues that this "slippage" represents a form of symbolic violence against women "under the guise of celebration." His presentation demonstrates the power of media producers to create and recreate gender meanings in popular culture.

Anna Michelson (Northwestern University) explored the emergence of erotica within the genre of romantic fiction. She explained that writers and producers of mainstream romance novels had to accept erotica writers' use of sexually explicit prose, LGBT protagonists, and the use of digital publications. These boundary disputes were also linked to romance writers' devaluation of erotica writers as amateurs rather than professional authors. Each of these conflicts had to be resolved before erotica could be accepted as part of the romantic fiction genre. Michelson's work demonstrates how cultural shifts are facilitated through boundary negotiations among producers.

In addition to consumers and producers, this session drew attention to the role of gatekeepers in preventing or facilitating cultural shifts around gender. **Christine Slaughter** (Yale University) considers the influence of social movement actors on culture by investigating representational activism within the National Organization for Women (NOW). Her study focused on the strategic actions of a NOW taskforce that aimed to address misrepresentations of women in media. NOW sought to appoint women to organizations that monitor and control media, such as the FCC. Slaughter argues that this approach is "reactive," rather than transformative. NOW did not focus on cultural production or creating new media products, instead NOW sought to challenge existing culture representations of women by targeting structural organizations that act as gatekeepers between the public and media.

Francesca Tripodi (University of Virginia) also addressed the role of gatekeepers in media. Tripodi examined the persistence of a gender gap in biographical content about men and women on Wikipedia. This gender gap prevails despite edit-a-thons that are purposefully working to add content about women to this site. Through virtual ethnography and interviews, Tripodi analyzed content that was nominated for deletion. She found that content about women was twice as likely to be flagged for deletion, even though this content often met the notability requirements for inclusion on Wikipedia. Tripodi's project shows how gatekeepers promote or stall efforts to create a more inclusive digital media space.

This session offered a thought provoking discussion about the degree to which media precipitates or challenges cultural shifts. The papers shared a concern with examining contested meanings and gender representations in the media. As Press noted, these works remind us of the persistence of gender themes, the interplay between media and culture, and the importance of questioning influence.

Culture & the 2016 Presidential Election

Dustin S. Stoltz,
University of Notre Dame

In a paper session organized, and presided, by **Ronald Jacobs** (Univ. of Albany), cultural sociologists reflected on the events leading up to the 2016 US Presidential election, and the aftermath. In particular, the talks consider the intersection of meaning and power, politics and media.

Philip S. Gorski (Yale University) tackled the question of why white evangelicals preferred Trump to other GOP candidates. That is, this constituent of the electorate supported a candidate who seemed antithetical to their espoused values. Why? Gorski suggests that Trump engaged a "secularized" version of "American religious nationalism," which went far beyond the story of "American exceptionalism." This is exemplified by two Biblically inspired discourses about conquest and apocalypse, and which are both joined by the common metaphor of blood. Blood, in particular, provides for the ease with which religious boundaries are equated with ethnic and racial boundaries in this discourse. Finally, Gorski argues, in American religious nationalism, there is a longing for a real or imagined "Golden Age," which was embraced quite clearly in Trump's campaign slogan "Make America Great Again." In short, Trump's rhetoric incorporated conquest, apocalypse, ethno-religious boundaries, and nostalgia, and, in turn, resonated with white Christian nationalists. However, Gorski suggests, as a secularized version of this American religious nationalism which omitted direct references to scripture or Biblical allegories, Trump was not beholden to Christian political theology.

After winning the Nevada primary, and in response to support from those in Nevada with less formal education, Trump said "I love the poorly educated!" **Mabel Berezin** (Cornell University), reflecting on this statement asks: what made Trump so appealing to the ''poorly educated''? In her cultural and historical analysis, she finds that the answer to this question is not so much what Trump said, but rather "what he did or what he promised to do." The value of doing over saying—or one might say, street smarts over book smarts—was a primary source of attraction for voters with less formal education. Trump built his public persona by emphasizing the physical and material ways in which he acts in the world, and he did so against a popular culture that "devalorized" those who worked and did not attend college. By way, for example, of pictures of him hard-hatted on job-sites and of Donald Trump Jr. stating that because of his father they were the only billionaire's children that could operate a "D10 Caterpillar." Thus, despite being a wealthy east coast elite with an MBA from Wharton, his persona united with those who "worked on

things" in rejecting those who "worked on concepts."

Robin Wagner-Pacifici (The New School for Social Research) and **Iddo Tavory** (New York University) argue that Trump's win in 2016 is an "event" precisely because it was unexpected, and for many, disorienting. Using the concept of "rupture" — as the suspension or rejection of predictable trajectories and narratives — they suggest that the Trump campaign did not simply create a rupture in political life, rather the promise of such a rupture was the modus operandi of the campaign. For many Trump voters, his rejection of "business as usual" in Washington was a motivating charm. Using the election, Wagner-Pacifici and Tavory reimagine the relationship between Weber's charismatic and bureaucratic political apparatus. They suggest, in particular, that sociologists must better theorize empathy in a time of rupture in a way which resists the tendency to assume a simple temporal unfolding between means and ends.

Arlie Hochschild's Strangers in Their Own Land, argues that a "deep story" captures the resentment of the white working-class, characterized by an allegory of waiting in line for the American dream, while others are allowed to cut ahead. Hochschild argued that while this story was more about feelings and not facts, it did reflect her participants lived experience—in particular, their economic burden. Concluding that Fox News, or other conservative media outlets, was the source of the story would be, she contends, "too simple." Building on this, **Francesca Polletta** (UC-Irvine) with co-author **Jessica Callahan** (UC-Irvine), argue that two features intrinsic to stories, interacting with two historical shifts in the American media landscape, allow both of these interpretations to be true. Stories often draw upon other stories, this, they argue, provides a pathway by which elite-produced stories come to feel as if they reflect people's mundane lives. Stories are also told to build collective identity and this makes plausibility of secondary importance. Regarding historical shifts, the rise of conservative commentary, specifically its pedagogical approach, deconstructed mainstream news to reveal the trenchant "liberal bias."

Finally, aided by the the proliferation of user-shared media, people were able to see the "truth" of the deep story promulgated by conservative pundits even if did not directly reflect their own personal experiences.

Each of these cultural analyses of the 2016 Presidential Election can be found in a recent special issue of the *American Journal of Cultural Sociology*.[1]

STIGMATIZATION AND DISCRIMINATION
Kristen Clayton,
University of Georgia

Michéle Lamont (Harvard) organized an informative session titled "Stigmatization and Discrimination", in which she, **Graziella Moraes D. Silva** (The Graduate Institute, Geneva), **Jessica S. Wellburn** (University of Iowa), and **Joshua Guetzkow** (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem) discussed findings from their book *Getting Respect: Responding to Stigma and Discrimination in the United States, Brazil, and Israel*[2]. Throughout the session, presenters discussed how cultural context shapes perceptions of and responses to stigmatization and discrimination.

Moraes D. Silva focused on stigmatization and discrimination in Brazil. Based on 160 in-depth interviews with working and middle-class Brazilians, she explored how black Brazilians understand and experience racism and how they make decisions about whether and how to respond. She found that respondents believed there was racism in Brazil but that the "subtle, masked, and veiled" nature of racism made it difficult to say when they had experienced it.

Respondents' also highlighted the intersection of race and class, as many black Brazilians believed they were stigmatized and discriminated against because their race was interpreted as a sign of low socioeconomic status. Some Brazilians responded to racism by calmly confronting and attempting to educate the perpetrators. In other situations, they subtly responded to mistreatment, conveying the message "that was racist and you are misrecognizing me" without actually naming race. Alternatively, participants sometimes chose not to respond to stigmatization and discrimination at all because they did not know how or did not have the energy to react.

Jessica S. Wellburn continued the discussion by highlighting African Americans' experiences with stigmatization and discrimination in the United States. She explored how working and middle class African Americans navigate persistent racism and how their strategies for responding to stigmatization and discrimination vary by class, gender, and age. She found that participants easily recalled a number of experiences with racism. For most types of incidents, there was no significant class variation; both working and middle class African Americans had many experiences with stigmatization (e.g. assaults on worth) and discrimination (e.g. exclusion; denial of access to resources). Respondents had a repertoire of strategies for dealing with these experiences, including confronting the perpetrator (e.g. filing a formal complaint, speaking out), management of the self (e.g. humor, picking battles), not responding or isolating oneself. Interestingly, when asked how to best improve African Americans' circumstances, many highlighted individual-level strategies (e.g. working harder, placing more emphasis on education, and strengthening morals and families in black communities) that did not correspond with their own strategies for navigating racism. Relatedly, respondents were less likely to emphasize collective strategies for group improvement. Based on her data, Wellburn suggests that African Americans may be becoming more individualistic in their discussions of inequality.

Joshua Guetzkow discussed his work on Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel and Ethiopian Jews in Israel. His discussion focused on how symbolic boundaries differently positioned these groups in relation to Israeli Jews and how these different positions led to group differences in perceptions of and responses to stigmatization and discrimination. The Israeli Palestinian respondents were full citizens of Israel yet not full members of the imagined religious community. Ethiopian Jews were full members of the imagined religious community but perceived as inferior due to ethnic and racial stereotypes associating Africa with backwardness. Despite the fact that the two groups occupied similar disadvantaged structural positions, symbolic boundaries predicated on different forms of difference resulted in different perceptions of and responses to stigma and discrimination. Ethiopian Jews in Israel were more likely to perceive discrimination as a personal affront based on ethnic and racial stereotypes of inferior capabilities, whereas Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel perceived discrimination as the result of enduring, large-scale religious and political conflicts. Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel embraced education for advancement, but not assimilation and believed that confronting the perpetrators of discrimination would not change anything. In contrast, Ethiopian Jews were more likely to confront perpetrators, responding to stigma and discrimination in an attempt to prove their capabilities. They were also more likely to emphasize education for assimilation.

Bernice A. Pescosolido (Indiana University, Bloomington) concluded the session by highlighting the major themes of the book and accompanying ASA session. She introduced a broader discussion of stigma and discrimination by making connections between how these concepts are conceptualized in race scholarship and in medical sociology. The session was highly informative, highlighting how minority groups feel and respond to stigma and discrimination differently in different national contexts, and how these perceptions and responses are shaped by their cultural context and the cultural repertoires available to them.

History in Cultural Explanation
Michael Lee Wood,
University of Notre Dame

When I saw that **Lyn Spillman**'s (Univ. of Notre Dame) session, "History in Cultural Explanation," was to feature no less than five papers, I wondered how on earth everyone would be able to give due diligence to their rich historical work within the allotted time. This might have been a problem with less capable presenters, but not with this group, whose presentations were all richly detailed and cogent and together demonstrated a useful array of concepts (cultural imaginaries, micro-practices, artefacts, continuity) and methods (corpus linguistics) for historical analysis, and convincingly demonstrated the irreplaceable role of historical analysis in the study of culture.

Chandra Mukerji (UC, San Diego) led the session with her work on racial imaginaries, investigating their historical origins and their role in organizing contemporary discourse. Mukerji traced racial imaginaries to the racial categories that she said were an early feature of modern culture ("modern" here referring to the period following the plague that devastated Europe). According to Mukerji, racial categories during this time developed around two distinct poles: one christian and the other classical, or natural. On the christian pole, observations of racial diversity were understood in terms of distance from God, and social hierarchies were justified in terms of moral capacity for order. On the classical pole, by contrast, racial diversity was understood as a function of breeding, and social hierarchies were justified as natural differences in the ability to reason and govern. Mukerji then argued that in the contemporary world, although logic of neoliberalism undermines the old racial categories, the same racial imaginaries persist. Hence, for example, we see Trump evoke both moral and classical distinctions to understand social hierarchies, describing inner cities as "hell" or referring to categories of "winners" and "losers."

Richard Biernacki (UC, San Diego) presented on the importance of investigating "micro-practices" in the production of culture and of going beyond macro-level "national traditions." Specifically, Biernacki argued that differences in the ways that German and British authors conveyed their work to publishers in the eighteenth century created different "universes of experience" which influenced the particular directions of German and British literature and philosophy during this time period. In Great Britain, publishing required alienation from the product of one's labor. Biernacki suggested that this corresponded with the development of the idea of the self as a proprietor, seen in Hume's understanding of the self as the possessor of or by sensations and Austen's idea that feelings are owned by the self and not simply had. In Germany, by contrast, the publishing industry was such that authors were paid by the page and delivered their work in segments, entailing the estrangement in production rather than estrangement from the product. For Biernacki, this condition influenced Hegel's idea of the expression of the self as a transitory moment, exemplified in Novalis's project of the "making of a self" and Goethe's declaration in Faust that "in the beginning was the act."

Pertti Alasuutari, **Marjaana Rautalin**, and **Jukka Tyrkkö** (University of Tampere), demonstrated the value of computational methods for historical sociology in their study of national policy-making in the British Parliament from 1803-2005. By using corpus linguistics to analyze a leviathan historical dataset ("all records of the British Parliament from… 1803-2005"), Alasuutari, Rautalin, and Tyrkkö were able to evaluate the claim that there was a significant shift in national policy-making post-WWII characterized by increased interdependence and diffusion of policy models. Their empirical findings qualified the previous narrative in two ways: first, they found that decision-making had been interdependent for at least the last 200 years, and did not suddenly enter the scene after WWII.

However, they also found that instances of the term "model" appearing near the name of a foreign country (e.g. "the German model") and instances of the 2-gram "policy model" spiked in the early 1950s and increased over time. Alasuutari, Rautalin, and Tyrkkö argued that this indicates the time that the idea of transferrable models, exported from 1930's science, began to catch on among policy-makers.

Laura J. Miller (Brandeis) and **Emilie Hardman** (Harvard) articulated the importance of material objects in understanding the long trajectories of cultural movements through their investigation of vegetarian and vegan cookbooks in the United States. Cookbooks, they argued, are artefacts that

embody a historically-situated cultural legacy. As such, they carry meanings that connect people across time and space and thereby allow a cultural movement to survive even without popular support. Thus, although successive instantiations of vegetarianism and veganism responded to contemporary political concerns, they were not wholly disconnected from previous generations of the movement because their directions and concerns were influenced by the meanings found in previous cookbooks.

Pepper Glass (Weber State University) concluded the session by highlighting the benefit of articulating the particular mechanisms by which "the past" leads to current realities, which he demonstrated through his historical investigation of immigration in Ogden, Utah. Glass began by noting that according to extant theories of immigrant destinations, Ogden's status as a "new immigrant destination" and its high proportion of Latino residents is unexpected. He argued that Ogden became an immigrant destination initially because of its geographic location, being near the Golden Spike ceremony which marked the completion of the transcontinental railroad and being roughly equidistant from Portland, Los Angeles and San Francisco. This brought economic opportunities, a diverse population, and a considerable amount of debauchery that earned the city a bad reputation in the predominantly Mormon state. Though the particular things that gave Ogden this vilified status eventually moved on, the negative reputation stuck (as a native Utahn myself, I can verify this fact). This ensured the continued segregation of the city, discouraged gentrification, and allowed immigrants to fashion downtown Ogden to their own wants and needs.

Contact us with suggestions for essays, book reviews, symposia, reports on conference panels, etc.—or just themes or topics you'd like to see covered in the newsletter.
Graduate students are especially welcome to be involved!
Contact us at dgraizbord@uga.edu

The newsletter of the Culture Section provides a rich repository of knowledge about cultural sociology and the sociology of culture. Its pages, which span from the 1980s to the present, index major debates, movements, and shifts. To contribute to our collective memory, the next several newsletters will feature an article or feature from an earlier newsletter. We hope these reprints will stimulate reflection on theoretical, methodological, and substantive changes and continuities in our community of practice.

Editor's Introduction
Stephen Hart, SUNY-Buffalo

The following symposium is the first component of a newsletter series on "The Arts and Politics." The contributors were responding to the following charge: The title is to be taken broadly. Popular art forms are included along with elite ones.

Politics means not only government policies and programs, but also social movements and the formation of social values. The connections between arts and politics can operate in both directions (e.g., government activity affecting arts, or arts affecting or expressing political values) and take varied forms. This is an opportunity for you to say what you think the key issues, topics, and lines of research—recent, current, or potential—are within this general topic as it is or could be addressed by sociologists, or to highlight a particular line of research that seems especially important… Below you will see responses from Paul DiMaggio, Judith Blau, Richard Peterson, Judith Balfe, Gladys Engel Lang and Kurt Lang, and Victoria Alexander…

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

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

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

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

such that nonprofits should be encouraged to take them over?

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

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

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

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

5. The Arts in Politics. Under what conditions do artists' communities become sites of organization for political change (and under what conditions are artists apolitical)? To what extent and under what conditions do art,

music, and literature play a catalytic role in social movement efforts, either as sources of identity, cohesion, or ideas? Here we can learn from students of religion.

Art First
Judith R. Blau,
University of North Carolina

Is it sheer chance that the NEA was the first victim of Congress, in the vanguard of the phalanges of justice-enhancing, rights- conferring, restitutive programs (AFDC, OASDHI, SSI, EPA, SOP, SLS, FISL, OSHA, Pell grants, OE, HUD, ETA, Medicare, HHS, NSF, Medicaid, SSA, DOL, DOC), to take a beating in congressional budgets and executive expenditures from which the heavy-hitting, be-tough, lock-em-up money-makers[3] (DOD, BFAT, INS, CIA, and FBP) were exempt?[4] Of course, federal budgets and executive spending do not necessarily reflect public priorities.

This all may be a mere blip in our halcyon drift towards the Great Society. Micro-politics at its worst. But why art first? Before starving children, the elderly, the environment, education, public transportation, safety regulations in chicken plants, disabled, the ill, homeless, the aged, dilapidated inner-city housing? Was the attack on the NEA for artists' subversiveness? One reason I ask is that the Happenings of the 1960s were pretty subversive—couples bagged in burlap sacks shimmy shammied on the floor while being pelted with used copies of W. D. Ross's Nichomachean Ethics. No one got the point, and no one so much as peeped.[5]

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[3] That is, "money makers" in terms of our national accounting system. It should be noted for the record that Simon Kuznets described the national accounting system and the GNP as being inaccurate indicators of the social health of the nation.

[4] Forbes blames the "alphabet agencies" (AFDC, HUD, etc.) for high spending, while failing to note where most of the money goes: Department of Defense (DOD), Bureau of Fire Arms and Tobacco (BFAT), Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), CIA, and Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBP).

[5] Admittedly, these were not supported by public funding.

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

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

Weber's mechanism of "the switchmen" has been ignored[6] because it implies a mere shift in the direction of an institution, such as more education in a credentialing society ups the ante of requisite qualifications. Yet the metaphor (literally, someone who changes the direction of the rail, "Weichensteller der Bahnen"[7]) can be interpreted in the larger context of Weber's writings to mean a transformation that is accompanied by deep, underlying contradictions.[8] I have elsewhere translated this as "the toggle switch," to imply that the inside of the gadget (circuitry) may not look like the outside.[9] In short, the dialectic Weber

suggests is that we view art as a leading indicator of complex, large-scale social and economic transformations in society. Art may be confounded with other institutions that are less opaque in theory, but bafflingly so as praxis. As Plato wrote, "Soc[rates said]: The best rhapsodist might 'narrativize' the chariot driver, but could not be one." (Actually, the conventional translation is, "speak for," and this raises interesting Geertzian conundrums of its own, assuming Socrates meant all the others besides the rhapsodist, and including the poor and the homeless.)

The Arts in Status Group Politics
Richard Peterson,
Vanderbilt University

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

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

While the creation of the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities in the 1960s might be seen as a major final step in establishing fine art as the state-sanctioned currency of cultural capital, quite a different reading now seems more accurate. Beginning earlier, but accelerating since the Second World War, members of the elite were no longer willing to finance the arts, and the Endowment was created to shift the increasing "burden" of arts support from the elite to the state.

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[6] Not entirely ignored. See Ahmad Sadri, *Max Weber's Sociology of Intellectuals* (Oxford University Press, 1992).

[7] Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie. Vol 1. (J. L. B. Mohn, 1920, p. 252).

[8] "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions" and "The Social Psychology of the World Religions." Pp. 267-301, 323-62 in H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology (Oxford University Press, 1946).

[9] J. R. Blau, "The Toggle Switch of Institutions." *Social Forces,* forthcoming. The toggle logo on your screen, and

your "click" on the mouse disguise a lot of complexity that most of us know little about.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Analysts of media and advertising have become skilled in understanding differences in reception,

but those focusing on the fine arts (where form is at least as important as content in the meaning that is conveyed) have been less successful in doing so. How might we operationalize the effects of the fine arts? Do they ever change people's attitudes, or do they work primarily (as Suzanne Langer said) by clarifying and solidifying existing predispositions? That is no small thing in eliminating can't, confusion and anxiety, and providing a sense of solace and/or direction. But how do we test this? One op-ed piece has suggested that we test the impact of Vermeer by locking Clinton, Dole and Gingrich in the closed gallery to see if they could reach agreement on the budget in the presence of that serenity—itself created just at the end of the 30 Years War and in the midst of other religious conflicts that had ravaged all of Europe, including the Netherlands, as in Bosnia today.

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

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

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

on the other and raising many intriguing questions each of us is free to pursue according to taste.

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

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

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

A historical, and preferably a comparative, perspective is needed to illuminate the various interfaces between politics and art as, for example, whether certain modernist styles are intrinsically connected with a particular brand of politics or due simply to a fortuitous coincidence of events and personalities. Futurists in Italy were nationalistic and enthusiastic supporters of the First World War whereas in Russia they were pacifist and internationalist. In the end, both found

themselves pushed aside, more completely in the Soviet Union, by a regime they had so enthusiastically embraced. Their influence spread largely through their international connections, such as the politically and artistically progressive Bauhaus, which further developed leads pioneered by constructivists. After the Second World War, when the USA had become the dominant center for abstract art, some reviled these innovations as an escape from the more openly political art of the depression.

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

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

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

Victoria D. Alexander,
University of Surrey

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

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

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

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

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

My students are right in one sense, however. Our mass, capitalist society operates quite differently than earlier societies, and one cannot easily compare cultural objects produced by these different systems. The "political" message that underlies much of today's mass culture, as many Marxists scholars have pointed out, is the celebration of consumption. Today's political avant garde reflects the multiculturalism and identity politics inherent in America's rich diversity. Our political sensitivities to different peoples doesn't extend, how- ever, to dead-for-500-years Italians—with important consequences for aesthetic judgment. For us, Renaissance artworks are objects of beauty (in which a political message is hidden). In contemporary art, the strength of the political message in a work often suggests the value, the "beauty" of the work. Objects can be beautiful even if, as in some avant-garde work, they are shocking and horrible to look at. Or, in the reverse, pleasant-looking advertisements are considered ugly. Though I personally don't think ads are the best of our culture, I wonder if future aestheticians will agree with us. They might prefer the slick, eye-pleasing images of advertisement to the more challenging work of our time as the sales pitches and political messages fade. Perhaps the best way to de-politicize the arts is to wait a couple hundred years.

The Langs reply to Alexander

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

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

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

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

Book Summary

Memory Activism: Reimagining the Past for the Future In Israel- Palestine
(Vanderbilt UP, 2017)

Yifat Gutman,
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

In my new book I examine how collective memories of a contested past can be used as a weapon of the weak for political change. The book presents and conceptualizes a surge in memories of a difficult past among civil society and grassroots groups around the world in the last two decades, which I term "memory activism." I define memory activism as the strategic commemoration of contested pasts outside state channels for the purpose of influencing public debate and political discourse. This new transnational phenomenon bridges cultural memory studies and social movement research and entails a reexamination of the relationships between culture and the political. In what follows I briefly present my research and elaborate on the concept of memory activism in relation to cultural memory theory.

I present memory activism through a pertinent case, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 2000-2011. Based on ethnographic methods and qualitative analysis the book follows three groups of peace activists, both Jewish-Israeli and Arab-Palestinian citizens, who have been remembering pre-1948 Palestinian life and their fate in the 1948 war. This history is known as Al Nakba (the catastrophe, in Arabic). The groups' remembrance was conducted to disseminate the post-conflict model of truth and reconciliation during active conflict using hegemonic memory practices, tours and testimonies, that are a central part of Israel's dominant memory culture. Memory practices of Palestinian citizens, primarily return visits, also appear in this activist memory work, and the meeting of the two sets of national memory practices is the most interesting part.

Memory-activist practices differ from more "traditional" and official commemorative practices by their interactive nature, their accessibility, and their aim to reach the current residents of sites where violent events once took place. Memory activists appropriate cultural practices as a means of reframing public debate about the past, to influence people's views on present political issues, and to project a vision for the future. Like the groups in Israel, memory activists in other parts of the world often work in local spaces where violent events have occurred in the past, where they organize tours of ruins, mark space using signposting, restore the physical environment, and publish maps and tour guides in order to document and produce knowledge on the past. Many of these groups collect testimonies from current and former residents of these sites and house them in archives and information centers. Community-based educational and artistic work is often facilitated as well, on-site and online.

The political motivation behind memory-activist initiatives varies, and while they can be used to advance less peaceful and democratic aims, I trace memory activism historically to a temporal shift in international politics that is underlined by an effort to "come to terms" with violent histories in order to advance peace and reconciliation.[10]

Integrating Memory Activism into Collective Memory Theory

While memory activism differs from existing categories of "mnemonic actors",[11] it can be conceptualized in relation to existing classifications. I view mnemonic agents as "moral entrepreneurs" that seek public arenas and compete for support for their interpretations of the

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[10] See, among others, Olick, Jeffrey K., and Brenda Coughlin. 2003. "The Politics of Regret: Analytical Frames." In Politics and the Past: On Repairing Historical Injustices, edited by John Torpey, 37–62. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield; Torpey, John. 2003. "Introduction." In *Politics and the Past: On Repairing Historical Injustices*, edited by J. Torpey, 1–34. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

[11] Bernhard, Michael, and Jan Kubik, eds. 2014. *Twenty Years after Communism: The Politics of Memory and Commemoration*. New York: Oxford University Press.

past.[12] Some of them, like "communities of memory",[13] unite around the memory of an event in an effort to keep it actively remembered, while others, like memory activists, are more interested in advancing moral and political agendas beyond commemoration

Grouping mnemonic actors into three general "ideal types" makes evident that memory activism remains a blind spot that should be integrated into cultural memory theory:

1. The first ideal type, which is the most studied among scholars of non-state memory, refers to individuals and groups who have personal experience or family ties that connect them to the historical events that they would like to publically remember. Among these are memory agents,[14] memory entrepreneurs,[15] or communities of memory,[16] as well as victims groups, former dissidents, and veterans groups. These are often portrayed as competing with each other over state recognition and legitimacy in what is perceived as a limited public space and a zero-sum game of mnemonic "assets".[17] Memory activists are different from the first "ideal type" groups not only because they may lack personal experience and stakes in the historical events to be remembered, but more significantly because their goals extend beyond commemorative issues. Rather, they aim to address a larger political issue and

influence the dominant public debate in their societies, using memory practices as the means to do so.

2. A second ideal type of mnemonic actor is more pragmatic and expert-based and less personally invested in the events to be remembered; these are memory practitioners, for-profit initiatives, and "pragmatic activists".[18] These have been portrayed either as implementing transnational ideas and norms in domestic public debates or as mediating among different memory groups and the state in domestic struggles.[19] Memory activists are different from these "pragmatics" and experts because they strive not to mediate or commemorate but to take a stand and intervene in existing political discourse and public debate.

3. A third ideal type of mnemonic actors are more politically motivated. Defined by Bernhard and Kubik as "political forces that are interested in a specific interpretation of the past," they "often treat history instrumentally in order to construct a vision of the past that they assume will generate the most effective legitimation for their effort to gain and hold power."[20] Through a state-oriented political science lens, these agents are characterized according to their vision of themselves and their opponents and their style of interaction in the political arena: as warriors, pluralists, abnegators, and prospectives. However, in Bernhard and Kubik's work, all these actors are rationally calculating to gain power rather than being morally or ideologically invested in promoting a specific understanding of the past with the hope that this will lead to a new

[12] Wagner-Pacifici, Robin, and Barry Schwartz. 1991. "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past." American Journal of Sociology 97 (2): 376–420. p. 382

[13] Irwin-Zarecka, Iwona. 1994. *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamic of Collective Memory*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction. Pp. 47-50

[14] As, for example, in Vinitzky-Seroussi, Vered. 2009. *Forget-Me-Not: Yitzhak Rabin's Assassination and the Dilemmas of Memory*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

[15] Jelin, Elizabeth. 2007. "Public Memorialization in Perspective: Truth, Justice and Memory of Past Repression in the Southern Cone of South America." *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 1:138–56.

[16] Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance*

[17] Rothberg, Michael. 2009. *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

[18] Wüstenberg, Jenny. 2011. "Transforming Berlin's Memory: Non-state Actors and GDR Memorial Politics Today." In *Remembering the German Democratic Republic: Divided Memory in a United Germany*, edited by David Clarke and Ute Wölfel. 65–76. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

[19] ibid

[20] Bernhard and Kubik, *Twenty Years after Communism*, 4

understanding of present problems and project a new vision for the future.

While memory activists are political actors, they mobilize the past not for the aim of gaining power and status, but for advancing their moral and ideological visions. Like Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz's conceptualization of moral entrepreneurs, memory activists "seek public arenas and support for their interpretations of the past" because they care about these interpretations, rather than using them instrumentally to advance their climb up the social ladder. Moreover, the silenced past that memory activists wish to make present and their interpretations of violent histories are highly controversial and more often attract public rejection and denial rather than granting the activists legitimacy and recognition in.

Instead of seeking political power as a goal in and of itself, the intervention that memory can perform opens a window onto the meaning and nature of "the political." In the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, my interrogation reveals that using cultural memory as a means for political ends entails a process of de-politicization rather than a formal and explicit claiming of power. The de-politicization is of activities that appear to be extremely "political" – i.e. controversial and illegitimate in the larger society – and expand the schism between activists' national group and state ideology. In Chapter 3 I explicate the strategic logic of articulating memory activism around the Nakba as nonpolitical in Israel and explain the importance of such consciousness-raising efforts for bringing about political change. In articulating nuanced distinctions among four different definitions of the "political," I argue for the real political work done by memory activism of Israelis and Palestinians, not as simply building political support for Palestinian statehood but as a pervasive consciousness-raising strategy among Jewish Israelis, through a depoliticization that is followed by a re-politicization and the taking of a moral and political stand.

BOOK REVIEW

THE CRISIS OF JOURNALISM RECONSIDERED: DEMOCRATIC CULTURE, PROFESSIONAL CODES, DIGITAL FUTURES, edited by Jeffrey C. Alexander, Elizabeth Butler Breese, Maria Luengo

Ian Sheinheit,
University at Albany, SUNY

The Crisis of Journalism Reconsidered is an important and necessary addition to cultural sociology. Continuing the call for a more focused and institutionalized media sociology, this volume demonstrates the utility of cultural sociology for media analysis. The wide-ranging pieces in this volume all consider (or reconsider, as the title suggests) the "crisis" of journalism. As Matt Carlson points out in this volume, crises are communicated and processed through narrative.

Thus, according to the themes in this book, thickly analyzing the structures of crisis narratives, which allow journalists to set boundaries, define journalism, and re-entrench their sacred values, engenders a more nuanced, complex, and accurate understanding of the current state of journalism.

Unsurprisingly, Jeffrey Alexander, in his programmatic call for a theoretical reorientation to understanding the "crisis" in journalism, argues for culture and meaning to be brought to the fore. The profusion of arguments lamenting the decimation of journalism over the the past fifteen years, Alexander argues, is reductionistic. The causes of the "crisis" and its consequences in these arguments are almost always twofold. First, the advent and proliferation of digital communication technologies have shattered the advertisement based economic model that print journalism has relied on for decades. And, second, democratized information dissemination creates the conditions for a decrease in journalisms'

epistemic authority. A core problem with this assessment, as this book illuminates, is reducing journalism to its material capacity and/or the medium in which is it disseminated. That is to say, that journalism does not simply bend its knee to technological change. Rather, there are deep-seated cultural codes, which are connected to professional ethics, civil morals and democratic norms, which guide, ballast, and activate journalism. These autonomous cultural codes impact journalism-in-action. Further, through performances and narratives, the sacred values of the journalistic profession can be reinforced.

The authors in this volume represent top journalism scholars worldwide. This international representation helps to deal with the problem of US centricity in discussions surrounding the crisis in journalism. The international empirical focus of the chapters ranges from the United States, Germany, Scandinavia, Norway, and Western Europe in general. The volume also succeeds at creating a cohesive thread. While detailing the exemplar work in this volume cannot be accomplished in such a small space, some highlights can be mentioned. Elizabeth Butler Breese asks the pertinent question, what is new about the current crisis? This piece navigates the similarities between narratives engulfing past and current crises. Daniel Kreiss uses democratic theory to argue that journalism needs to move beyond a purely information-based conception of journalism and toward what he calls, "civic skepticism." Carlson's analysis of meta-journalistic discourse surrounding the documentary Page One: Inside the New York Times illuminates the performances of "normative reassurance." Maria Luengo highlights the binary codes immanent in the backlash of the New Orleans community to the shutdown of the Times-Picayune. Similarly, Stephen Ostertag finds that there was a moral and emotional impetus to blog, post Katrina in New Orleans. Matthias Revers, comparing the state house press corps in New York and Bavaria, succinctly underlines the problem of reductionism as cultural code and media system specificity in Germany and the US

garnered different responses and interpretations of digital media performances.

Though the majority of the studies in this volume demonstrate the reinforcement of perennial journalistic values in the face of dramatic shifts, Michael Schudson and Nikki Usher are not as optimistic. Schudson asks if we can "whistle a happy tune," and after reading his ten transitions I am still not sure of the answer. Frequently applying the "hamster wheel" metaphor, Usher makes things quite clear and argues that this is indeed a moment of "technologically induced crisis that threatens the future of professional journalism" (p. 283). These chapters strengthen the discussion and highlight the importance of a comprehensive analysis of journalism that recognizes the empirical overlap between meaning and the material.

Being attuned to the deep grooves of cultural structure is a welcome remedy to the reductionism of many arguments concerning the crisis of journalism. It elucidates the inextricable link of journalism to professional ethics and civil moral as well as its importance to democratic norms and processes. Journalisms' autonomy, however, is always precarious. Current changes in technology and the resulting economic upheaval have been, and continue to be, drastic. Further, as political actors and institutions test the capacity and boundaries of journalism's capacity to check their power, journalism has a lot on its shoulders. If we follow the logic of this work, it is possible the global rise of illiberal democracies can be the trauma that reinforces and fortifies the professional codes of journalism and its import to democracy. This crucial empirical question has yet to be answered. It is clear, however, as cultural sociologists, we would do best to avoid reductionism. Accomplishing this requires understanding the connecting tissue and symbiotic relationship between journalistic performance—and all the codes and narratives that that entails—with technological, economic, and political transformations. While more needs to be done, this book is a welcome step in this direction.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BOOKS

BEAMAN, JEAN. 2017. *CITIZEN OUTSIDER: CHILDREN OF NORTH AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS IN FRANCE*. OAKLAND: UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS.

While portrayals of immigrants and their descendants in France and throughout Europe often center on burning cars and radical Islam, Citizen Outsider: Children of North African Immigrants in France paints a different picture. Through fieldwork and interviews in Paris and its banlieues, Jean Beaman examines middle-class and upwardly mobile children of Maghrébin, or North African immigrants. By showing how these individuals are denied cultural citizenship because of their North African origin, she puts to rest the notion of a French exceptionalism regarding cultural difference, race, and ethnicity and further centers race and ethnicity as crucial for understanding marginalization in French society.[21]

BERREY, ELLEN, ROBERT L. NELSON, AND LAURA BETH NIELSEN. 2017. *RIGHTS ON TRIAL: HOW WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION LAW PERPETUATES INEQUALITY*. CHICAGO: UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

Rights on Trial assesses the U.S. system of employment discrimination litigation, finding that it perversely reinforces the very hierarchies that antidiscrimination laws were created to redress. Cultural sociologists may find of interest the book's relational, multi-perspectival mixed methods, which identify the outcomes of legal cases at the national level while also problematizing the notion of an outcome, based on litigants' interpretations of how cases end. *Rights on Trial* interfaces with online audio recordings of the plaintiffs, attorneys, and employers quoted in the book (www.rightsontrial.com). This interactive component brings to life the voices of legal participants and the emotional valences of their lived experiences. Ellen, Bob, and Laura Beth will happily Skype into courses or reading groups to answer questions.[22]

XU, BIN. 2017. *THE POLITICS OF COMPASSION: THE SICHUAN EARTHQUAKE AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN CHINA*. STANFORD: STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS.

The 2008 Sichuan earthquake killed 87,000 people and left 5 million homeless. In response to the devastation, an unprecedented wave of volunteers and civic associations streamed into Sichuan to offer help. The Politics of Compassion examines how civically engaged citizens acted on the ground, how they understood the meaning of their actions, and how the political climate shaped their actions and understandings.

Using extensive data from interviews, observations, and textual materials, Bin Xu shows that the large-scale civic engagement was not just a natural outpouring of compassion, but also a complex social process, both enabled and constrained by the authoritarian political context. While volunteers expressed their sympathy toward the affected people's suffering, many avoided explicitly talking about the causes of the suffering—particularly in the case of the collapse of thousands of schools. Xu shows that this silence and apathy is explained by a general inability to discuss politically sensitive issues while living in a repressive state. This book is a powerful account of how the widespread death and suffering caused by the earthquake illuminates the moral-political dilemma faced by Chinese citizens and provides a window into the world of civic engagement in contemporary China.

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[21]More information:
https://www.ucpress.edu/book.php?isbn=9780520294264

[22] More information:
http://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/R/bo26176123.html

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Journal Articles & Book Chapters

Ghaziani, Amin. 2017. "The Closet." *Contexts*. Summer edition.[23]

Leap, Braden. 2017. "Survival narratives: Constructing an intersectional masculinity through stories of the rural/urban divide." *Journal of Rural Studies* 55: 12-21.[24]

Reyes, Victoria. 2017. "Three Models of Transparency in Ethnographic Research: Naming Places, Naming People, and Sharing Data" *Ethnography* (Published online first).[25]

Rodriguez-Muñiz, Michael. 2017. "Cultivating Consent: Nonstate Leaders and the Orchestration of State Legibility." *American Journal of Sociology* 123(2):385-425.[26]

Srinivas, Lakshmi. 2017. "One-by-Two." *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Special issue on English Keywords in India. 40: 2.[27]

Stoltz, Dustin S., & Taylor, Marshall A. 2017. "Paying with Change: The Purposeful Enunciation of Material Culture." *Poetics* 64: 26-39.[28]

Awards & Distinctions

Joachim J. Savelsberg (University of Minnesota) received the 2017 Albert J. Reiss Distinguished Scholar Award from the ASA Section for Crime, Law, and Deviance and the 2017 William J. Chambliss Lifetime Achievement Award from the SSSP Law & Society Division. He was also offered fellowships at the institutes for advanced study at Stellenbosch (South Africa) and Paris, each for one semester of the 2018-19 academic year.

Media Spotlight

The Oct. 9, 2017 issue of the New Yorker includes a profile of Ellen Berrey's book,[29] The Enigma of Diversity: The Language of Race and the Limits of Racial Justice (University of Chicago Press), which won the 2016 Honorable Mention for Best Book from the Sociology of Culture Section.

The essay does not make reference to it, but Berrey also published a Salon article related to the book that has been shared on social media more than 33,000 time.[30]

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[23] https://contexts.org/articles/counting-the-closet/
[24] http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0743016716304892
[25] https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138117733754
[26] http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/693045
[27] http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00856401.2017.1295566?journalCode=csas20
[28] https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2017.07.003

[29] https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/10/09/the-limits-of-diversity
[30] https://www.salon.com/2015/10/26/diversity_is_for_white_people_the_big_lie_behind_a_well_intended_word/