Cultures of Voting
Michael Schudson, UC–San Diego

Imagine yourself a voter in the world of colonial Virginia where George Washington, James Madison, Patrick Henry, and Thomas Jefferson learned their politics. As a matter of law, you must be a white male owning at least a modest amount of property. Your journey to vote may take several hours since there is only one polling place in the county. As you approach the courthouse, you see the sheriff, supervising the election. Beside him stand two candidates for office, both of them members of prominent local families. You watch the leading landowner and clergyman approach the sheriff and announce their votes in loud, clear voices. When your turn comes, you do the same. Then you step over to the candidate for whom you have voted, and he treats you to a glass of rum punch. Your vote has been an act of assent, restating and reaffirming the social hierarchy of a community where no one but a local notable would think of standing for office, where voting is conducted entirely in public view, and where voters are ritually rewarded by the gentlemen they favor.

Move the clock ahead to the nineteenth century, as mass political parties cultivate a new democratic order. Now there is much more bustle around the polling place. The area is crowded with the banners of rival parties. Election day is the culmination of a campaign of several months and many barbecues, torchlight processions, and "monster meetings." If you were not active in the campaign, you may be roused on election day by a party worker to escort you on foot or by carriage. On the road, you may encounter clubs or groups from rival parties, and it would not be unusual if fisticuffs or even

Debate:
Is Culture Wars a Myth?

Editor's note: The article on culture wars in the fall issue of the newsletter evoked two critiques, from Laura Edles and James Hunter. These are published below, followed by a rebuttal from Smith et al.

The Role of Culture in Culture Wars
Laura Edles, UC–Irvine and University of Hawai'i–Manoa

In their provocative article, "The Myth of the Culture Wars" (Culture section newsletter, Fall 1996), Smith et al. maintain that "Culture wars is a myth. The conventional wisdom that Americans are divided into two warring camps slugging it out over abortion, prayer in schools, and homosexuality is greatly exaggerated" (p. 1). Based on in-depth interviews with 128 American church-going Protestants, Smith et al. find that (1) many evangelicals are "oblivious" to culture war issues; (2) even evangelicals who *are* aware of culture wars often express a "distaste" for them; and (3) "more than a few" evangelicals think that "many specific culture wars issues were unimportant or foolish" (page 8). Smith et al. also maintain that the culture wars are a "myth" because "empirical evidence" shows that the primary concern of "the mass of Americans" is not "cultural," but "economic" issues. "The vast majority of Americans are much more interested in whether their kids learn to read well, whether they can walk their streets safely at night, and whether the government can get the deficit under control than they are in protesting obscene art and gays marching in parades" (p. 1).

A Response to Robert Wuthnow ("From the Chair," Fall 1996)
Ezra Kopelowitz, Hebrew University–Jerusalem

What is a sociologist's role within the give and take of public debate and controversy? How can we make a difference? In the last issue of the newsletter, Robert Wuthnow tackled these questions by arguing that it is possible to steer a path between the relativism of endorsing all identities as equal and hiding behind the cloak of academic neutrality (which in effect hides implicit values, removing them from critical discourse). Wuthnow sees this middle path as built on a "mild relativism" or "value pluralism"—"a rejection of the belief in the reducibility of all values to one value that serves as a common denominator to all the valuable ways of life" (Wuthnow,

citing Joseph Raz 1994). However, if we accept the value of "other ways of life" then what provides the boundaries of discourse, preventing a "self-interested, tribalistic free-for-all?" The answer according to Wuthnow is found "in a realization that one must live within a tradition, a community, in order to realize one's identity most fully."

Wuthnow is simultaneously seeking to protect the autonomy of the individual's right to adopt counter-normative values versus the responsibility the same individual must have towards communal norms—to criticize the rules and play by them at the same time. In this light, the role of the academic is

guns were employed to dissuade you from casting a ballot after all.

If you proceed to the ballot box, you may step more lively with the encouragement of a dollar or two from the party, not a bribe but a tangible acknowledgment that voting is a service to your party. With so many citizens on the parties' election-day payrolls, it is not difficult to see voting itself as a kind of part-time employment for the party. The parties' ticket peddlers, stationed near the polling places, distribute to you and other voters preprinted party tickets that you deposit in the ballot box without having to mark them in any way. You cast your ballot not out of a strong sense that your party offers better public policies; parties are more devoted to distributing offices than to espousing programs. Your loyalty is related more to comradeship than to policy, it is more an attachment than a choice, something like a contemporary loyalty to a high school or college and its teams. Voting is not a matter of assent but of affiliation.

Turn, finally, to the Progressive era as reforms cleanse voting of what made it corrupt, in the eyes of reformers, and compelling, in the eyes of voters. Here you will find a world recognizable to American voters of our own day. Reformers, who objected to campaigns of spectacle rather than substance, pioneer "educational campaigns" that stress the distribution of pamphlets on the issues rather than parades of solidarity. They pass legislation to ensure a secret ballot. They enact voter registration laws. They help create an atmosphere in which it becomes more common and more respectable for traditionally loyal party newspapers to "bolt" from party-endorsed candidates. They insist on official state ballots with candidates of all parties listed rather than party-provided tickets; some states even develop their own voter information booklets rather than leaving political education up to the parties.

In this Protestant Reformation of American voting, the political party's ability to reward its faithful declines with civil service reform; its ability to punish with social disapproval fades as the privacy of the voting booth grows secure. Even the party's capacity to attract attention declines as commercial forms of popular entertainment begin to offer serious competition.

Voting, in this new context, was transformed. What was an act of affiliation became an act of individual autonomy. Political reforms insisted on *dis*affiliation as the voter came to the polling place. Where it had been standard practice for parties to convey people to the polls, it was now forbidden in many states. Where party workers had distributed tickets, voters now stood in line to receive their official ballot from state-appointed officials. Where parties mustered armies of paid election day workers, many states now outlawed the practice. Where electioneering efforts accompanied voters right up to the ballot box, new regulations created a moat of silence within so many feet of the polling station. Reformers sought to enable autonomous voters to cast their votes unpressured by outside forces.

What these three scenes of voting reveal is that this thing—the vote—is a changeable piece of human social behavior. Political scientists, political historians, and op-ed critics routinely employ the vote as a measure of the changing health of American civic culture: if voter turn-out goes up, the polity gets a smile and a handshake and is told to come back in four years. If voter turn-out goes down, the doctors prescribe a new diet, more civic exercise, and fiscal anti-depressants. But if the meaning of the vote shifts as markedly as I suggest it does, voter turn-out may not be so reliable a symptom as this suggests.

Social scientists over the past half century have paid little attention to American voting practices and electoral laws. The notable exceptions have almost all been policy-related and can be listed on one hand: (l) an important, but esoteric, debate about the relative role of electoral law changes and political-economic changes in explaining the decline of voter turn-out 1890-1920;[1] (2) contemporary debate over the impact of voter registration laws in depressing voter turn-out;[2] (3) Supreme Court decisions emerging from the Voting Rights Act of 1965 concerning the constitutionality of legislative redistricting to increase the chances for minority group representation ("racial gerrymandering");[3] (4) contemporary explorations of alternative voting systems to encourage or enable better representation of minority groups;[4] (5) and work in comparative political systems concerning what kinds of electoral procedures best suit deeply divided and polarized societies.[5] Also worth mention is the current effort of the New Party, just argued before the Supreme Court in December (Timmons v. Twin Cities Area New Party), to restore electoral laws that make "fusion tickets" possible.[6]

Sociology has contributed an enormous amount to the study of American politics, but there is a sense in which it contributed too much. That is, as political scientists learned to study political behavior rather than legal and political institutions, they learned also to turn to sociological variables to explain their findings. Class, race, age, ethnicity, gender, region and other measurable demographic features of the voting population—including more subjective attributes like "partisanship," have preoccupied a great deal of political science.

This brought new levels of sophistication in analyzing election results. But it also obscured something important about voting that has to do with the *culture* of voting. My claim is simply this: politics is culture, too. Politics is a set of symbols, meanings, and enacted rituals. These symbols, meanings, and rituals, moreover, have changed dramatically in the course of American history, so much so that comparing "voter turn-out" in 1996 to voter turn-out in 1896 or 1796 is to compare apples and oranges.

There has been of late a certain nostalgia, at least among academics, for the good old days of late nineteenth century American politics when (outside the South) voters turned out in droves, citizens read (or at least bought) newspapers that printed long speeches by political figures and reported party rallies in detail, and widespread participation in marches, barbecues, and torchlight processions indicated that people *enjoyed* politics.[7]

But what was politics? At the national level, it was a self-perpetuating game for organizing the federal patronage. It was self-perpetuating in that most of the financial support for campaigning came from a type of extortion: candidates for office were obliged to make financial contributions to the parties and people rewarded with federal jobs in the post office, customs house, and elsewhere were "assessed" 3 percent of their salaries for the privilege of office-holding.

It was a "game" in that the parties did not generally stand for anything but getting into office. The national government was, in Theodore Lowi's terms, "distributive" rather than "regulative" in its functions, and so parties divided "over spoils, not issues," as Richard Hofstadter put it. As Theda Skocpol neatly terms it, this was "patronage democracy"—and little else.[8]

The idea that politics should be about policies and that parties should provide some clarity on policy by lining up on different sides of "issues" that they help to define is not a general truth about the world. It is a particular view of that peculiar sphere of human activity we call "politics" (a sphere, of course, whose boundaries have shifted dramatically over time). The Founding Fathers did not share this perspective. Their understanding was, generally speaking, that the populace need not have and really should not have strong views about policies and issues. Voters should support candidates of sound character and of strong familiarity with local needs and preferences. But once elected, representatives should be agents free to listen to the arguments of other representatives familiar with other local needs and preferences and should use their best judgment to deliberate on these matters to arrive at the public good. "Politics" of the policy-making sort should normally happen only in the legislatures.

For the founders, then, electing representatives was supposed to be an activity that appears, from a twentieth century perspective, almost apolitical. Like an election of captain of a sports team, election meant choosing esteemed leaders, not settling on policies. So it was consistent for the framers of the Constitution to both champion representative democracy and oppose any kind of political campaigning or "electioneering." They could both support republican governmental forms and oppose the organization of political parties and the expression of political views by private voluntary associations.

Politics was occasionally about issues, to be sure. Most obviously, elections in the 1850s and especially in the presidential campaign of 1860 concerned above all else the question of the extension of slavery into the territories. But even this, perhaps, makes the general point: the Democrats and Whigs in the 1840s and 1850s had tried to keep slavery off the agenda and it took finally a new party, the Republicans, to break into national prominence riding the issue of "free soil." An issue-oriented politics exploded, then, but the post-Civil War years saw a rapid return to the politics of organization rather than ideology.

The emphasis on issues emerged with the formation of parties and their effort to appeal to a mass electorate. However, it did not become part of the canonical understanding of what politics means until Mugwumps and Progressives challenged political parties at the end of the nineteenth century. Their efforts were symbolized and strengthened not only by the parties' move to conduct "campaigns of education" rather than campaigns of enthusiasm, but by reforms like the initiative and referendum, and by the increasing tendency of presidents from Theodore Roosevelt on to identify themselves with specific legislative programs.

Most political commentary today operates within the culture of Progressivism and assumes what we might term the Progressivist fallacy—that politics equals policy. This is one view of politics. But other views not only have been powerful in the past but persist in other domains of our social worlds today. Think of electoral activity that has no evident relationship to policy of any sort—elections of team captains, elections in schools of class presidents or student councils, elections in fraternities and sororities, most elections of school boards and many elections of local government, elections in professional associations, elections in the "Sociology of Culture" section. Sometimes candidates for office in such elections feel obliged by Progressivist ideology to concoct some pseudo-policy views, but only under the most unusual circumstances would any voter in these elections make a decision on the basis of such statements.

This raises questions about what kind of a human activity is "the political." Certainly some of the organizations at the heart of the political are strange sociological beasts, none more so than the political party. In the United States, the leading parties do not require membership dues or attendance at meetings or anything other than, at most, a declaration of affinity (formally required in voter registration in some states but not in others). The parties have generally had very slight ideological coherence. They have been machines for competing for office and for organizing elections and they have evoked a surprisingly high level of loyalty, even as, simultaneously, citizens who pledge allegiance to one party or another are inclined to accept the widespread view that parties stand in the way of a truly self-governing democracy.

I point out the peculiarity of our sense of formal, institutionalized political life without offering any clear answer to the question of what kind of a human experience "politics" is. But the general tendency of my historicist approach to these matters, clearly, is to say that there will be differences over time in what constitutes the "political" for people, socially constructed differences. I see real opportunity for sociologists to take up questions of the human subjectivity and the symbolic constitution of politics, topics that political science has, for the most part, failed to recognize.

NOTES

[1] See the exchange among Walter Dean Burnham, Philip Converse, and Jerrold Rusk in *American Political Science Review* 68 (September, 1974).

[2] See Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, *Why Americans Don't Vote* (New York: Pantheon, 1989).

[3] The landmark study is Abigail M. Thernstrom, *Whose Votes Count? Affirmative Action and Minority Voting Rights* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

[4] The most celebrated, if widely misunderstood, work on this topic is by Lani Guinier. See Lani Guinier, *The Tyranny of the Majority* (New York: Martin Kessler Books, Free Press, 1994).

[5] Arendt Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977) and Arendt Lijphart, *Democracies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

[6] See *New York Times*, National Edition, Dec. 5, 1996, A12.

[7] The best account of late nineteenth century campaign practices is Michael McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). Another fine account, for the elections of 1864 and 1868, is Jean Baker, *Affairs of Party* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983). Both accounts are colored by the hope, which I do not share, that the nineteenth century success in generating political enthusiasm might offer clues to remedying the political malaise of our own time.

[8] Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948) p. 169; Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992) p. 72; and Theodore Lowi, "American Business, Public Policy, Case-Studies, and Political Theory," *World Politics* 16 (1964) 677-715.

Debate on Culture Wars, from page 1

Smith et al. are quite right to point out that Americans are not neatly divided into *two extremist camps* slugging it out over abortion, prayer in schools, homosexuality, etc. DiMaggio et al. also recently find that "polarization," as measured in surveys, is not increasing. Yet, the fact that most Americans are not extremist ideologues does not make the culture wars any less "real." Culture—as well as the culture wars—is/are far more complicated than that.

In my view, the culture wars are not a battle between *individuals*, but a battle between complex, intertwined, sacred *ideas* and *values* at the heart of American society. This battle of ideas and values is often played out in seemingly trivial skirmishes in the media (e.g., "obscene art," "gays marching in parades"). But even in these micro-battles, the stakes are not so obscure.

Examined more closely, one sees competing systems of meaning, shaking up core American symbols and taken-for-granted frames (e.g., what is "Columbus Day"—what does it mean?; What is "art"? Is homosexuality "evil"?). In addition to the sensationalized media pap, the culture wars are also played out in critical legislation on immigration and affirmative action (e.g., Propositions 187 and 209 in Califor-

nia), in precedent-setting court cases (e.g., homosexual marriage in Hawai'i), as well as in micro-level battles in specific neighborhoods, communities and schools (e.g., the battle over multicultural textbooks in Oakland—see Gitlin, 1995).

Of course, Smith et al. are quite right that the media greatly *distorts* culture war issues. Who can deny that the media sensationalizes and thereby changes the dynamics of incidents and celebrates polarization, especially in their reliance on extremist and radical personalities/spokespeople? Yet, the potency of the culture wars stories is precisely that they *capitalize* on actual tensions and confusion regarding race, ethnicity, gender and class. As Gitlin (1995:180) maintains, "press obsessions can never be taken entirely at face value"; media panics *crystallize* anxiety and shape it into a world view.[1] The media simplifies and concretizes complex social and moral issues into manageable targets and scapegoats. This may give us the *illusion* that the culture wars is a battle between neatly divided "liberal" and "conservative" camps, but the fact is that the culture wars battleground is often *within* individuals.

To be fair, one of the less prominent but most important points of the Smith et al. article supports this more complex rendering of culture. Smith et al. point out that specific moral codes *within* Christianity (linked with "individualism") can *negate* impulses for polarization. Specifically, while the "Christendom legacy—which mixes essential elements of Christian doctrine with aspects of the historical Protestant experience in America—makes Protestants want their morality and standards to be normative for American society"; at the same time, the *very same* Protestants are committed to the conflicting idea of individualism, e.g., both in the Protestant notion that individuals must ultimately decide for themselves to follow God or not, and the secularized political notion that individuals should not be coerced by social institutions (and especially not by the government) about "personal" matters, etc.—which leads them to "accept, if not embrace tolerance and pluralism" (p. 9).[2]

The problem is that Smith et al. optimistically conclude that "because they firmly believe both [pluralist/Christendom codes] simultaneously, the logic of each restrains the tendencies of the other from being carried too far" (p. 9). But aside from the fact that we do not know that the respondents "*firmly believe both*" (it may very well be that the pluralist frame corresponds to a more normative answer to the interview question, while the "Christendom" frame corresponds to a more deep-seated feeling of "right" and "wrong"), we don't know, in fact, *how* the ambiguity and tension in moral codes will be resolved (or that it will be resolved at all). Certainly, the competing "pluralism" versus "Christendom" frames are *ripe* for exploitation by the media. (Indeed, these are the frames currently being exploited in the debate on homosexual marriage in Hawai'i.) Sadly, Gitlin finds that in many culture war battles (e.g., the battle over multicultural textbooks in California) ambivalence and confusion are "resolved"—with the help of the media—in favor of skewed and rancorous polarization.

This brings us to the methodological dilemmas of cultural analysis. Smith et al. quite rightly point out that survey data does not reveal the cultural *meanings* that respondents attach

to issues. Thus they use in-depth interviews, they "get out and actually converse with [people], sit down in their living rooms for a few hours and let them talk about themselves." Yet, though obviously a thorough methodological discussion is outside the scope of their brief newsletter article, discovering *meaning* is much more of a methodological morass than Smith et al. let on. Cultural analysts must not simply insert interview excerpts instead of numbers; they must twist and turn each text in order to see the myriad of ways it might be read. They must place each text in various, larger, symbolic universes.

Consider, for instance, the following quote: "look at the kids of mothers who don't work and you can tell a difference in the way they're brought up . . . mothers and fathers both have to work just to keep up, just to pay their bills and feed the kids. . . ." Smith et al. unequivocally assert that what the respondent *means* is that "economic pressures [rather than culture war issues] are pulling families apart." They assert that this perspective *coincides* with "the liberal point of view" (assuming we know what that is); and they conclude that most Christians are concerned not about "culture war" but about "economic" issues. Yet, certainly this (and other) quotes can be read in other ways too—for example, "if women do not need to work for economic reasons, THEY SHOULD STAY HOME." Framed in this way, this (and other) quotes are not evidence of a war in the sense of a battle between two "camps," but it is the stuff of a huge battle of ideas, roles and values of which, I must say, I feel very much a part.

In sum, while Smith et al. celebrate the fact that many Christian evangelicals are "ignorant," "oblivious," or "disinterested" in "the culture wars," I for one wonder if the celebration is premature. Harking back to the good old days when families could survive on one paycheck might be harmless, "liberal" reminiscing, and/or it might be a thinly disguised hankering for the (mythical) "good old days" when "women were women and men were men" (and nonwhites and homosexuals were invisible). Indeed, the fact that homosexuality is trivialized as "gays marching in parades" and juxtaposed with "obscene art" points, to me, in a far more ominous direction.

* Thanks to Eric Rambo and Steve Hart for helpful comments and advice.

NOTES

[1]Of course, as Todd Gitlin points out, there are many other elements to a good story, and institutional and other factors (e.g., personal connections) that influence the media. Pp. 178-80 in *The Twilight of Common Dreams: Why America is Wracked by Culture Wars* (New York: Henry Holt, 1995).

[2]Stephen Hart more forcefully makes this point in the preface to the 1996 edition of his book, *What Does the Lord Require? How American Christians Think about Economic Justice* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press). Similarly, Donal Carbaugh finds that complex notions about "individual rights" play themselves out in the form of the "respect norm," or tolerance for morally opposing views, on the Phil Donahue show. For instance, one audience member states, "I'm sorry, Phil, *we're supposed to respect your guests and your guests are supposed to respect us*, but I think it's sick. I really think it's a sick situation" (italics mine; they indicate the "individualist"/"pluralist" code). *Talking American* (Norwood, NJ: Apex, 1989).

On the "Myth" of the Culture Wars
J. D. Hunter, University of Virginia

In the fall, 1996 issue of the Culture Newsletter, Chris Smith and his colleagues publish an essay on the culture wars in which they conclude, without equivocation or qualification, that the culture war is a myth. How do they know? The authors conducted in-depth interviews with 128 people and found that most of their interviewees were either oblivious to the "culture wars" or disdainful of it. There are some who would say "So what! Average people may be oblivious to 'quarks' but that doesn't mean that quarks don't exist" or "Average people may be oblivious to or disdainful of their class position, but this doesn't mean that their subjective views are empirically accurate." Be this as it may, the subjective opinions of 128 people are presented as *the* challenge to conventional wisdom about the culture wars hypothesis and to those "in the academy and the media [who] have cooperated in fostering this [mis]perception." In their own words, "If ever a study could detect Protestants' investment in culture wars, this was it."

The challenge is a weak one after all. Wasn't it Durkheim, Lévi-Strauss, Douglas, and Foucault (among others) who wrote that culture is more than the aggregated attitudes of individuals? Didn't Wuthnow argue that to view culture in this way is to delimit one's reading of culture within the narrow parameters of the old-style sociology of knowledge reductionism? Somewhere in the back of my mind I seem to remember thinking that there is more to culture than public opinion; that culture might have something to do with systems of symbols, with discourse and discursive environments, with institutions that manufacture cultural artifacts and compete within fields of symbolic activity.

I echoed this methodological position explicitly as a central contention of my own argument about the culture war—several times. On page 290-291 of *Culture Wars*, for example:

> . . . the opposing moral visions at the heart of the culture war and the rhetoric that sustains them acquire something of a life of their own. The culture war is . . . rooted in an on-going realignment of American public culture and has become institutionalized chiefly through special purpose organizations, denominations, political parties and even branches of government. The fundamental disagreements that characterized the culture war, we have also seen, have become even further aggravated by virtue of the technology of public discourse, the very means by which disagreements are voiced in public. In the end, however, the opposing moral visions become, as one would say in the tidy though ponderous jargon of social science, a reality sui generis—a reality much larger than—indeed, autonomous from—the sum total of individuals and organizations that give expression to the conflict. It is these competing moral

visions and the rhetoric that sustains them that become the defining forces of public life.

And in *Before the Shooting Begins* (pgs. vii-viii),

> I would like to emphasize straight away (what some reviewers of the earlier book missed) that the culture war of which I speak cannot be explained in terms of ordinary people's attitudes about public issues. Contemporary cultural conflict has at its core, competing moral visions. These moral visions are often enough reflected (imperfectly) in the world views of individuals but by virtue of the way they are institutionalized and articulated in public life, these moral visions acquire something of a life of their own. It is at this level that the term culture war—with the implications of stridency, polarization, the mobilization of resources, etc.—takes on its greatest conceptual force.

Perhaps it is the failure to take into account the Durkheimian lessons about culture that critics like Smith and his colleagues resist what appears to be a simple dualism. Perhaps it is the failure to take into account this Durkheimian premise that helps to explain the logic of those other critics of the culture wars hypothesis who insist that a "strong center" is the dominant tendency in American society. After all, those who speak of a strong center invariably make their case on the basis of an examination of public attitudes on specific issues. If there is a "center," it is rooted in public opinion surveys, it is statistical in nature and, therefore, basically contentless. Any reasoned, coherent, and substantive center that may exist tends to be eclipsed by the polarizing rhetoric produced by the gatekeeping institutions of public culture. Perhaps overlaid upon the complexity of citizen attitudes, activist world views and organizational positions are competing moral visions sustained by a rhetorical structure and discursive environment operating according to their own imperatives.

This doesn't mean that public opinion is irrelevant. The 1996 Survey on American Political Culture[1] shows a polarizing dynamic within public opinion on these cultural matters — but it is not where Smith et al. look for it. Instead of being diffused within the American population as a whole or even within Protestantism, it is recognizable in the sharp differences between the minority identifying themselves as Evangelical supporters of the Christian Right (about 5 percent of the whole population) and the minority of secular social elites (also about 5 percent). It is also recognizable in the cluster analysis in the sharp differences between "traditionalists" and "permissivists." They not only disagree dramatically on the whole range of cultural issues but they are also aware of each other and thoroughly dislike and distrust each other. Yes they are social minorities in American society but they are clearly agenda-defining factions in the larger body politic.

Maybe Smith and his colleagues are on to something. Perhaps, ironically, the phenomenon they seek to debunk really is a "myth"—yet in a different sense than the one they intended, in the sense articulated by structuralists in the tradition of Durkheim, Lévi-Strauss, etc. From this vantage point, the moral visions that exist in American public culture not only contain a collective narrative irreducible to what particular adherents may or may not believe about it, but these moral visions themselves come to exist as a force to reckon with through the cultural strategies of those who oppose them. Whether or not these collective forces are adequately represented in the opinions tapped by survey data, they do exist as "objective" and "coercive" realities irreducible to collective psychology. Because these social realities are institutionalized within the party system, special-agenda organizations, the judiciary, denominations, competing media outlets and the like, we will be living with them and coping with their consequences for a long time to come.

NOTE

[1] Over 2,000 face to face interviews were conducted in the survey (with the assistance of the Gallup Organization), each one lasting, on average, 75 minutes. Reports are available through the offices of Post-Modernity Project, B 5 Garrett Hall, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22901. Telephone #: 804-979-7705)

The Discursive Environment is Rich and Multi-Vocal: Why Privilege Two Voices?

Chris Smith, UNC-Chapel Hill; with Michael Emerson, Bethel College; Sally Gallagher, Oregon State University; and Paul Kennedy, Gordon College

We are pleased to have the opportunity to respond to James Hunter's and Laura Edles's criticisms. We hope this discussion advances our collective understanding of this issue. We will address ourselves first to Hunter's arguments.

Hunter suggests that critics of his culture-wars thesis, like us, who pay attention to the views of ordinary people, are assuming a psychological-reductionistic view of culture as the aggregate attitudes of individuals. Hunter is talking past us here. We are fully aware of the existence and influence of symbolic structures, discursive environments, and institutionalized symbolic systems which are objective realities irreducible to collective psychology. The volunteeristic versus domineering narratives of the "pluralism" versus "Christendom" symbol structures we discussed in our article is one example. We simply have come to believe that Hunter's account of how these discursive environments operate in American public culture is overly-simplified, overly-deterministic, and greatly exaggerated in a number of ways.

First, Hunter's account characterizes the field of American public discourse as essentially bi-polar. He views it as operating along a unidimensional spectrum with two extreme minority positions occupying antagonistic ends, and the majority caught haplessly in the middle. We think this model is mistaken. The field of public discourse is actually multi-polar and multi-vocal. It is rich with a multiplicity of institutionalized discursive structures and cultural narratives that operate at different levels and dimensions, and which can cross-cut and synthesize. Why then should we privilege the "evangelical traditionalist" and "secular progressivist" voices as most influential in setting both the terms of debate and the way debates are processed institutionally and individually? What about New

Deal liberalism, Catholic social teachings, social-justice populism, utilitarian individualism, the American "democratic code" (Alexander and Smith 1993), and so on? Are we really to believe that the cultural force of all of these are "eclipsed" by the two voices Hunter emphasizes? Our research, and that of others (e.g., DiMaggio, Evans, and Bryson 1996; Davis and Robinson 1996), suggests they are not.

Second, Hunter's account asserts that the dynamics of culture wars have been so deeply entrenched and durably institutionalized in America's public institutions (the media, judiciary, denominations, movement organizations, etc.) that they will remain "*the* defining force" of public life for the foreseeable future. We think not. We suggest that the activists who fight culture wars must, in fact, compete with a host of other elites, activists, and lobbyists for resources and attention. And all of these have their own interests, ideologies, and agendas, which do not necessarily fit well into Hunter's traditionalist-versus-progressivist framework. Furthermore, we suggest that forces within many of America's gate-keeping public institutions have worked to insure that culture-wars activists have *not* consolidated their influence. The most recent examples of this are the Democratic and Republican parties during the 1996 elections, both of which successfully marginalized almost completely from their campaigns and debates the discursive structure of culture wars. For this reason, many Christian Right activists today are feeling ignored and discouraged.

Third, Hunter's account maintains that the discursive environment that generates culture wars can exert a major socio-political influence on American life, even when the vast majority of Americans perhaps don't know or care about culture wars. To this we offer a few observations. To begin, it seems to us that what is missing in this version of his defense of his thesis is an American public with agency whose lives are informed by substantive cultural narratives which they actually embrace. By Hunter's account, the five percent of activists on either side are resourceful, proactive, agenda-setting, the subjects of history. But the ninety percent in the ("basically contentless") middle who are not culture-warriors seem to be passive and ill-informed. They are the objects of a history being driven by others, the direction of whose lives are waiting to be defined by a symbolic discourse they themselves don't accept (a view reflecting the chronic defect of collective idealism which Alexander [1987: 312] notes). We prefer, however, to posit in the American public a degree of agency that explains their lack of interest in culture wars not simply as ignorance of or detachment from "the" debate that "really matters" (Hunter's unidimensional, bi-polar assumption again); but as the result of their embrace of *other* cultural narratives and symbolic structures which simply find culture-wars issues irrelevant or uninteresting (our multi-polar, multi-vocal, rich-complexity assumption again). Culture wars doesn't register with the majority of Americans, in other words, not because they are passive and dumb; but because, as active agents, they have other substantive orientations and interests driven by other, real cultural narratives.

Furthermore, given Hunter's version of the discursive-environment-versus-individual-attitudes dualism, it seems to us incumbent upon him to theorize more clearly how the elite/institutional/activist/symbolic-structural "level" relates to and influences the mass American public "level." Hunter writes that the traditionalist and progressivist sui generis moral visions are "coercive," that they "eclipse" America's political center, and that "we will be living with them and coping with their consequences for a long time." These kinds of statements are clear enough to trouble people, suggesting that culture wars matter for their lives; but they are imprecise enough to keep us from specifying how they actually do so. Perhaps one possible course is to recognize agency and the active generation and appropriation of multiple cultural narratives by the American public, as indicated above. In any case, if Hunter wishes to argue persuasively that culture wars exert a decisive influence on American public life, even while most Americans may know or care little about them, he needs to theorize more clearly the "causal" connection between the two levels in his dualistic system. We suspect that the more clearly Hunter theorizes this relationship, the less plausible his thesis—as currently argued, at least—will become.

Fourth, we would like to address Hunter's objections that he is being misread by his critics, that he never claimed that culture wars have anything to do with ordinary people's attitudes about or involvement in culture wars. Our reading of Hunter suggests that he actually wants to have it both ways: he does claim that culture wars transcend individual participation (as in his passages quoted above); yet, at the same time he also does suggest that culture wars very much do affect the lives of ordinary Americans all over the nation. Of course he *has to*, otherwise his thesis becomes less interesting and relevant. In his first work on the subject, after introducing readers to six culture-warriors in the Prologue, on the first page of chapter one, Hunter writes that the debates their lives embody "express views rooted in real lives unfolding in real communities all across the nation. . . . Though these voices are distinctive, they are not, in the end, extraordinary. Indeed, they share much that is common and familiar within American life, echoing thoughts and themes that resonate with many of our own experiences. All six people are basically middle-class Americans. . . . Looking at their backgrounds and current careers, it would be inaccurate to call any of these people 'intellectuals'" (1991: 31-33). Later in the Introduction (1991: 50), Hunter writes: "Though intellectuals and activists of various sorts play a special role in this cultural conflict, it would be very wrong to assume that this conflict is really just the lofty and cerebral machinations of squirrelly academic types who roam the corridors of think tanks and universities. To the contrary, this culture wars intersects the lives of most Americans, even those who are or would like to be totally indifferent." Something seems amiss, then, when Hunter cries foul because investigators like us take seriously these aspects of his story, yet find little evidence to support them.

Finally, we were confused that Hunter—having just discounted the value of the "subjective opinions" of our inter-

view subjects and of survey data generally—readily appeals to his own survey results to defend his thesis. Be that as it may, his argument remains unconvincing. Surely, we could, with the appropriate survey or (quite likely) Hunter's own data, identify many other clusters representing a few percent of the population that share a coherent ideology, are aware of adversaries, and maintain a significant voice in American public life. We do not believe that Hunter's two camps represent *the* agenda-definitive voices of American politics.

Incidentally, as part of our overall project, in 1996, we conducted an RDD national telephone survey with an N of 2,591. We also made a few hundred call-backs to sampled survey respondents to follow up in greater depth with longer interviews on specific substantive topics. Moreover, in addition to the 128 in-depth interviews with church-going Protestants that we did in 1995, the following year we conducted 195 interviews with American evangelicals in 25 states around the country (90 of whom were sampled from our phone survey, meaning that for those cases we have direct links between nationally-representative quantitative data and in-depth qualitative interviews).

Now a few comments on Edles's response. First, we concur with more than a little of what Edles writes, and are happy to see that much of her thinking agrees with our interpretation of culture wars. We agree, for example, that the media sensationalizes issues and creates an *illusion* that two neatly divided political camps are dividing America. We agree with her that distinct from the traditionalist-versus-progressivist culture-wars issues are very important social divisions between race, class, etc., on which culture-wars activists are dependent on trying to capitalize through frame-bridging. We agree that the kinds of moral concerns that the standard culture-wars thesis views as creating divisions *between* groups of Americans actually operate more profoundly as internal tensions *within* groups of Americans and individual Americans. That this neutralizes much potential cultural warring was precisely the point of our "Christendom-versus-pluralism" discussion. We also agree that discovering cultural meaning is a methodological challenge, and that analysts need to interrogate texts to consider multiple nuances of meanings. This is precisely why our ten-member research team has spent eleven full days together in three separate meetings "twisting and turning" our data to see "the myriad ways it might be read"—not to mention spending countless hundreds of hours analyzing our data individually. Finally, we agree that it is dangerous for some Americans to trivialize the legitimate rights-concerns of others.

However, we also think that Edles's view shares some flaws of Hunter's approach noted above. We do not think it helpful, for example, to conceive of the American people as the passive objects of other agents' activism, whose deeply-held views are simply "ripe for exploitation by the media." Nor do we find statements, for example, that culture wars is a battle of "sacred values at the heart of American society" sufficiently

clear in its theorization of the issue. What is America's "heart"? Whose values reside there and in what way? And how does the battle shape the real lives of ordinary Americans in ways that we should give it special attention (much less reconstruct our interpretation of the fundamental dynamics of American public life)? We hear, for example, much about textbook controversies in Kanawha County (WV), Oakland, and Orange County. But we would like to know, besides these, exactly how many textbook controversies have actually divided school communities in America? We suspect that a thorough enumeration would uncover surprisingly few.

Much of the weight of Edles's argument seems to hang on her skepticism about how ambiguity and tensions within people's moral codes actually are resolved. Perhaps, when push comes to shove, she suggests, people really do drop their volunteerist/pluralist commitments and run with a domineering Christendom mentality. And perhaps what people *really* mean when they talk about how the economy hurts family life, is that all women belong in the kitchen. All we can say is that we did not often see people opting for polarizing resolutions; people appear far more capable of living with cognitive dissonance than that. Nor did we hear, for example, that women "SHOULD STAY AT HOME." Most ordinary people, including conservative Protestants, simply do not think and talk in such ideological ways. People are typically much more pragmatic and internally-divided than that. We suggest that analysts who think otherwise have been reading too much James Dobson and Mary Pride. Yes, that objective discursive environment does exist out there. But, again, claims that it inexorably structures ordinary people's thinking and living appear to us to rely on assumptions about the relationship between structure and consciousness that are for our tastes far too mechanistic, overly-determined, and lacking in agency.

We stand, then, by our original argument: the vast majority of Americans are not particularly invested in or much influenced by culture wars, and, therefore, the idea that America is on the verge of a "shooting" war, much less anything remotely close to it, is a myth. Having cleared that ground, however, the time seems ripe for an analytical advance that would incorporate what *is* insightful in Hunter's work into a broader, more complex, and better theorized interpretation of American public life.

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not to take a particular position in a public controversy, which risks ignoring the possible truth claims of others, but rather to address issues in "a sophisticated manner. Sophistication . . . implies a trait or style that is rooted in sufficient knowledge and skill that it is respected for its capacity to provide leadership or to serve as a model in dealing with complex situations." The academic must add sophistication to social discourse "by bringing knowledge to bear on concrete problems and by providing training in how to generate and evaluate such knowledge."

The problem is that the question of boundaries remains unresolved. What does the "realization of community" mean? What differentiates "our" way of life, from "other" ways of life? What are the norms at the basis of the community which we are supposed to respect? Clarifying them means specifying the core values for which we stand, and the limits of our tolerance. Wuthnow only defines these values negatively, by adopting Raz's statement that multiculturalists should reject "the superiority of secular, democratic, European culture, and a reluctance to admit equal rights to inferior oppressive religious cultures, or one whose cultural values are seen as limited and less developed." The problem here is the lack of specification and a consequent fuzziness as to the values we sociologists are really trying to perpetuate when we participate in public debate.

We can solve this problem by distinguishing between entrance and participation norms in the public sphere. Participation norms in a liberal multicultural society are fully compatible with Raz's vision of the just society. Here "individual freedom and prosperity depend on full and unimpeded membership" in the social order. However, the paradox of liberal public life is that to gain "unimpeded" participation rights an individual *must* agree to certain universal restrictions. Specifically, he or she has to disengage from those beliefs that would limit the participation of others for nationalistic, religious, homophobic, sexist or racist reasons. The refusal to agree to this basic requirement must be countered with a denial of the right to participate in public discourse. Disengagement is the basis for engagement in the multicultural public sphere of a liberal society.

To endorse the engagement/disengagement dialectic is to embrace secular entry norms, which hold that ascriptive categories cannot serve as the basis for public participation. "What" you do is more important than "who" you are. Among others, this principle is the raison d'être of a social order upon which "science as a culture system" is founded and within which liberal multiculturalism has flourished. Only within this secular boundary can one speak of democratic discourse within and between disparate cultural communities, in which particularistic social groups are free to battle over the distribution of social resources and the ethical character of society (see Kopelowitz [1996]).

A split model of a public ethic for sociologists is needed. One part of the model is for tolerance and the corresponding perpetuation and propagation of knowledge needed for sophisticated public debate. The other part of the model is extremely intolerant, for it is an unreflexive value, the red line of secularism after which the scientific endeavor is no longer possible. By distinguishing between entrance and participation norms we replace grandiose, yet abstruse statements of the need for tolerance by specifying the secular boundaries of our relativism. The result is a clearer conceptualization of the limits and possibilities of a multicultural society and the role of the sociologist within it.

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Section Communications & Leaders

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For those who were wondering: there was no "Books of Note" in the Fall 1996 issue because the author was in the hospital. It will continue to be a regular feature (the editor hopes, forever).

Frith, Simon. *Performing Rites*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Like many humanists, Frith asserts that the values imbedded in pop music should not be sought in those works that are the most popular. Contrary to most humanists, however, he argues that music, like the rest of social experience, can't be read like a text abstracted from context. Its meaning is only found by understanding the social situation of its performance, including consumption.

Becker, Gary S. *Accounting for Tastes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. In this set of pieces, Becker argues for the social construction of tastes from the perspective of an economist.

Gottdiener, Mark. *Postmodern Semiotics: Material Culture and the Forms of Postmodern Life*. New York: Blackwell. In what might be read as a melding of the two prior perspectives, Gottdiener uses a set of case studies to develop a Peirce-based semiotics of contemporary culture and the search for identity in objects.

Lichterman, Paul. *The Search for Political Community: American Activists Reinventing Commitment*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Based on extensive participant observation, Lichterman argues that contemporary individualism does not necessarily weaken the commitment to the common good. He probes the personalized politics that has given strength to numerous recent social movements.

Sinclair, John, Elizabeth Jacka and Stuart Cunningham, editors. *New Patterns in Global Television*. New York: Oxford University Press. The authors describe the television industries of countries around the world. Together they challenge the view of U.S. or Western "cultural imperialism."

Cook, Deborah. *The Culture Industry Revised: Theodor W. Adorno on Mass Culture*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield. Cook argues that even Adorno's pessimistic reading of mass culture leaves room for "resistance" to the dominant culture industry.

Shrum, Wesley Monroe, Jr. *Fringe and Fortune: The Role of Critics in High and Popular Art*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Rather than seeing the distinction between high and low as a function of class distinction, Shrum sees it in the differing ways pop and fine art critics evaluate art works. His evidence comes from a careful analysis of theatrical criticism of the Edinburgh Festival and Festival Fringe presentations.

Ferrell, Jeff and Clinton R. Sanders, editors. *Cultural Criminology*. Ithaca, NY: Northeastern University Press. The authors focus on collective behaviors organized around style and symbolic meaning, and how these activities are criminalized by political and legal authorities. Examples are drawn from the subcultures of youth gangs, biker groups, media depictions of drug-related violence, serial killing, and the characterizations of genres of pop music.

Sanford, Bruce W. *Shooting the Messenger: Why Americans Hate the Media*. New York: The Free Press. In contrasting an idealized past with selected facts of the present, Sanford finds that Americans are increasingly susceptible to "fringe" opinions, and prurient entertaining news and are less respectful of the value of free speech and even hostile to what "mainstream" society "really" values.

Lowenthal, David. *Possessed by the Past: The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*. New York: The Free Press. Lowenthal explores the bitter irony that in this postmodernist age identity politics of ethnic heritage claims have become such a potent source of conflict around the world.

Sproles, George B. and Leslie Davis Burns. *Changing Appearances: Understanding Dress in Contemporary Society*. Philadelphia: Fairchild Books. In this text the authors provide a revealing insight into how to construct and change fashions.

Roach-Higgins, Mary Ellen, Joanne B. Eicher and Kim K.P. Johnson, editors. *Dress and Identity*. Philadelphia: Fairchild Books. Using a wide range of readings by authors ranging from Erving Goffman to Henry Louis Gates and Lila Abu-Lughod, the editors have assembled a very useful set of readings intended to suggest how dress makes the person.

Pat Kirkham, editor. *The Gendered Object*. New York: St. Martin's Press. The authors in this anthology focus on attempts to gender and regender a wide range of specific types of clothes, toys, toiletries, health care items, and consumer products.

Besser, Terry L. *Team Toyota: Transplanting the Toyota Culture to the Camry Plant in Kentucky*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press. Based on a set of interviews and systematic observation, Besser shows how Japanese systems of management have been reconstructed around the American idea of "team" and the "community of fate" so that all levels of employees will work together toward higher productivity.

d'Anjou, Leo. *Social Movements and Cultural Change: The First Abolition Campaign Revised*. Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter. d'Anjou explores how the British abolitionist movement of the late 1700s successfully reconceptualized slavery and the trade in slaves in ways that made the end of slavery inevitable.

Arluke, Arnold and Clinton R. Sanders. *Regarding Animals*. Philadelphia: Temple

University Press. How do we treat animals? Some are coddled as household members, or lovingly conserved in zoos, while others are raised for food and fur, or are hunted down as vermin. The authors explore the values that animal-workers develop to cope with the society's contradictory ways of treating animals.

Hays, Sharon. *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. Hays shows that at the same time that more professional middle-class women moved into the labor force, mothering was coming to be seen as more demanding. This view called "intensive mothering" holds the individual mother as primarily responsible for childrearing and dictates that the process will be child-centered, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labor-intensive and financially expensive.

Nissenbaum, Stephen. *The Battle for Christmas*. New York: Knopf. Nissenbaum details the circumstances surrounding the refiguring of Christmas from a time of drunken revel and acts of extortion of the well-to-do into a family-based time of giving gifts to children. A text book case of inventing tradition, and a Happy New Year to you and yours.

Three from Princeton University Press

Ostrower, Francine. *Why the Wealthy Give: The Culture of Elite Philanthropy*. Based on extensive interviews with nearly 100 wealthy New Yorkers, Ostrower shows the importance of elite philanthropy for maintaining the culture and structure of the elite class fractions.

Morawska, Ewa. *Insecure Prosperity: Small-Town Jews in Industrial America, 1890-1940*. In a highly focused study of the Jewish community of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, Morawska shows that rather than climbing out of the ethnic enclave as most wealthy large-city Jews have done, for fifty years these small-town Jews used the religious communal life brought from Europe to create and maintain a tight-knit entrepreneurial niche that kept its integrity in the face of the temptations of secularism and recurrent hard times in the local mills and coal fields.

Stewart, Kathleen. *A Space on the Side of the Road: Cultural Poetics in an "Other" America*. Stewart celebrates the exotica of small-town story-telling which she finds flourishing amid the graveyards of junked cars and coal slag of West Virginia.

University of Minnesota Press' Four

Gray, Herman. *Watching Race: Television and the Struggle for "Blackness."* Starting with "The Jack Benny Show" and "Amos 'n Andy," and tracing changes down to current programs, Gray shows how depictions of African Americans on U.S. commercial television has changed over the decades.

Noriega, Chon A. and Ana M. Lopez, editors. *The Ethnic Eye: Latino Media Arts*. The authors focus on Latina/o self-representation in films and videos.

James, David E. and Rick Berg, editors. *The Hidden Foundation: Cinema and the Question of Class*. The first set of articles focuses on the disappearance of class as a major category in film analysis. Other articles focus on class relations as depicted in early silent films and in other genres on down to the films of the 1980s.

Staiger, Janet. *Bad Women: Regulating Sexuality in Early American Cinema*. Early efforts to officially regulate the movie depiction of female sexuality, Staiger finds, engendered a wide public debate over the proper place of women in society.

Eight from the University of California Press

Rogin, Michael. *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot*. Rogin uses the depiction of "blackface" in U.S. films as a means for ethnics in the movie industry to shape a notion of "white" identity.

Pierce, Jennifer. *Gender Trials: Emotional Lives in Contemporary Law Firms*. This ethnographic study clearly shows gender differences in the roles of male and female lawyers and paralegals.

De Grazia, Victoria and Ellen Furlough, editors. *The Sex of Things: Gender and*

Consumption in Historical Perspective. This wide-ranging set of studies shows how the use of goods shapes gendered identities, and how fashion and body products shape women's views of themselves.

Glantz, Stanton, John Slade, Lisa Berg, Peter Hanauer and Deborah Barnes. *The Cigarette Papers*. This book offers an analysis of four thousand pages of confidential tobacco industry documents showing what the industry knew about the addictive properties of tobacco and its efforts to hide this information.

Christian, William A. Jr. *Visionaries: The Spanish Republic and the Reign of Christ*. Christian explores the relationship between the 1931 installation of the anti-clerical republican government in Spain and the subsequent sightings of Mary and the saints in dozens of towns across Spain.

Mathews, Gordon. *What Makes Life Worth Living? How Japanese and Americans Make Sense of Their Worlds*. Based on interviews with nine similarly based individuals in the U.S. and Japan, Mathews shows the differing views of love and work, religion, creativity, and self-realization.

Csordas, Thomas J. *Language, Charisma, and Creativity: The Ritual Life of a Religious Movement*. Csordas explores the dynamics of the recent Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement as part of the cultural and media phenomenon in conservative Christianity.

And Eight from Duke University Press

Pugh, Ronnie. *Ernest Tubb: The Texas Troubadour*. Pugh provides an authoritative account of the life and work of Ernest Tubb, the man who, more than any other, developed and popularized the honky tonk style in country music.

Lazarre, Jane. *Beyond the Whiteness of Whiteness: Memoir of a White Mother of Black Sons*. Lazarre, teacher of African-American literature and "white Jewish" mother of three "black" sons, has written this memoir of coming to terms with her sons' assertion that she cannot really know them because she is "white."

Moss, Kary L., editor. *Man-Made Medicine: Women's Health, Public Policy, and Reform*. Using the perspectives of law, science, history, and activism, these authors examine the gender-stereotyping and bias in the collection, analysis, and reporting of scientific data and in the ways health-related news is covered in the media.

Ross, Andrew, editor. *Science Wars*. The "culture wars-like" superficial debate between "creationists" and "evolutionists," masks a much more profound critique of science that should be made, these authors feel. They say that in this era of big corporate-government science, the value-free stance deflects legitimate questions about whose interests science now serves. The authors insist on there being a more accountable relationship between scientists and the communities and environments affected by their research.

Schulte-Sasse, Linda. *Entertaining the Third Reich: Illusions of Wholeness in Nazi Cinema*. The author reveals the similarities between Nazi films and those being produced in Hollywood at the same time. She demonstrates how Hollywood movie formulas frequently subverted the intended Nazi message.

Norris, Christopher. *Reclaiming Truth: Contribution to a Critique of Cultural Relativism*. Truth is very much out of fashion these days. Questions of truth and falsehood are taken to be simply internal to some language-game and in service of some power center. Norris argues that there is nothing as dogmatic, or silencing, as a relativism that acknowledges no shared truth conditions for contesting ideas. One of the discursive practices he recommends is reinstituting a clear distinction between the descriptive concept and the more nuanced metaphor.

Rony, Fatimah Tobing. *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle*. Rony explores early-twentieth-century representations of non-Western indigenous peoples in films ranging from the scientific and documentary to the commercial spectacle. Even such dissimilar appearing presentations are shaped by

the photographic technology of the time and share an anxiety about race.

Slobin, Mark, editor. *Retuning Culture: Musical Changes in Central and Eastern Europe*. The authors trace the changes in the meaning of folk and pop music in socialist Europe from the Stalinist era through the mid 1990s.

And Eight More from Routledge

McCarthy, Doyle. *Knowledge as Culture: The New Sociology of Knowledge*. The basic insight of the sociology of knowledge was that the ideas people hold derive from their material conditions. McCarthy seeks to reinvigorate the field by turning it on its head, saying that knowledge is *culturally* constructed. McCarthy illustrates this by reviewing the importance of assumptions about gender differences in shaping the scientific "facts" in the area.

Mestrovic, Stjephan, editor. *Genocide After Emotion: The Postemotional Balkan War*. The authors of the articles in this anthology cite media coverage and the lack of political response to the factional atrocities in the former Yugoslavia as evidence that Western society is now incapable of a compassionate response to human suffering.

Ignatiev, Noel. *How the Irish Became White*. When they first came to the U.S. in large numbers the Catholic Irish were widely held in contempt by the dominant Anglo-Saxon elements of society and seen as little different from African Americans. The idea of the Caucasian race helped to consolidate the idea of black–white differences and hastened the incorporation of the Irish.

Mort, Frank. *Cultures of Consumption: Masculinities and Social Space in Late Twentieth Century Britain*. Mort examines consumerism's construction of images of masculinity in the "street fashions" drawn from hip-hop, rap, and house subcultures, and he shows the effects these images have on identity and sexual politics.

Lorentzen, Lois Ann and Jennifer Turpin, editors. *The Gendered New World Or-*

der: Militarism, Development, and the Environment. The authors focus on diverse examples linking the global problems of militarism, underdevelopment, and environmental decay with the suppression of the rights of women.

Lee, Janet and Jennifer Sasser-Coen. *Blood Stories: Menarche and the Politics of the Female Body in Contemporary Western Societies*. Based on the written narratives of 104 women, menarche is seen as the central aspect of body politics in the U.S. and the devaluing of women.

Mencher, Joan and Judy Brink, editors. *Mixed Blessings: Gender and Religious Fundamentalism Cross Culturally*. The authors show that in some societies religious fundamentalism helps women gain economic power and shows how women in other societies maneuver within the restriction of patriarchal religious fundamentalism.

Passaro, Joanne. *The Unequal Homeless: Men on the Streets, Women in their Place*. Within our society man's place is seen in the street and women's the home. Based in this basic premise, the male homeless are much less likely to receive shelter than are their female compatriots.

Five from the University of Chicago Press

Nippert-Eng, Christena E. *Home and Work: Negotiating Boundaries through Everyday Life*. Nippert-Eng explores the myriad of ways that middle-class people choose to mark the boundaries between work and home or to meld the two. Do you have pictures of your family on your desk at work, and do you have symbols of your work at home?

Wolfe, Alan. *Marginalized in the Middle*. Wolfe sees the liberal ideals of open discussion as marginalized today by the shrill diatribes of extremists in the debates about gender and race.

Downs, Donald Alexander. *More than Victims: Battered Women, the Syndrome Society, and the Law*. Concerned about battered women, Downs suggests that the current ideas about battering that deny women's reason and will make for policies that act to perpetuate their victimization.

Streeter, Thomas. *Selling the Air: A Critique of the Policy of Commercial Broadcasting in the United States*. Noting that sounds which are made and decay in an instant have been made into property, Streeter shows the role of government actions in actively making possible the commercial broadcast media industry and in shaping its content.

Herek, Gregory M., Jared B. Jobe and Ralph Carney, editors. *Out in Force: Sexual Orientation and the Military*. The authors of this anthology show that the arguments against gays and lesbians in the military no longer focus on their patriotism or ability to serve but on the negative reactions of heterosexuals.

Sage's Six

Alasuutari, Pertti. *Researching Culture: Qualitative Method and Cultural Studies*. Alasuutari introduces methods and research tools helpful in doing research. These include ethnographic methods, methods of studying texts, and ways of linking qualitative and quantitative methods.

Meyers, Marian. *News Coverage of Violence Against Women: Engendering Blame*. Meyers shows that news coverage in the U.S. routinely depicts criminal violence against women and men differ-

ently, thus perpetuating the inegalitarian stereotyping of the sexes.

Hoover, Stewart M. *Mass Media Religion: The Social Sources of the Electronic Church*. Using a number of interviews with representative TV church viewers, Hoover explores the role of the media in fostering neo-evangelism over traditional church organizations.

Hoover, Stewart M. and Knut Lundby, editors. *Rethinking Media, Religion, and Culture*. The authors explore numerous implications of media evangelism and the media-based sacralization of leading popular culture icons. Topics include "Anomie and the Crisis of Ritual" and "Resistance through Mediated Orality."

Engelman, Ralph. *Public Radio and Television in America: A Political History*. Based on interviews as well as primary and secondary sources, Engelman traces technological, legal, cultural, and social forces that have shaped the development of Pacifica Radio, NPR, PBS, and community television.

Messaris, Paul. *Visual Persuasion: The Role of Images in Advertising.* By exploiting viewers' assumptions of a direct correspondence between photo images and reality, images can stand in for advertising claims that would be challenged if made verbally.

Vanderbilt University Press' Three

Reed, John Shelton. *Glorious Battle: The Cultural Politics of Victorian Anglo-Catholicism*. Reed has drawn on a wealth of archival material to trace the development of Victorian Anglo-Catholicism that attracted scholarly members of the clergy, elements of the aristocracy, and working class folk against the smug bourgeois Anglican establishment of the time.

Wolfe, Charles. *The Devil's Box: Masters of Southern Fiddling*. Based on personal correspondence, local newspaper accounts, interviews with surviving artists and their families, as well as the evidence of the phonograph records they made, Wolf traces the emergence of distinctive Southwestern and Southern fiddling styles in areas where the violin was often considered an instrument of Satan because of its seductive powers.

Whiteside, Jonny. *Ramblin' Rose: The Life and Career of Rose Maddox*. Tracing the career of Rose Maddox, one of the few women who rose to prominence in country music just after World War II, Whiteside shows the plethora of insults independent women entertainers faced in the era. He also casts light on the development of the West Coast country music scene which then rivaled Nashville as the center of music production.

Conference Report: Miniconference on the Problematics of Culture— Political Assaults, Multiculturalism, Cultural Practices
Vera Zolberg & Jeffrey Goldfarb, New School

On August 15, a day before the ASA meetings, the New School for Social Research hosted a miniconference on the problematics of culture. Under discussion were (1) attacks on culture that have sharply reduced national support for the humanities and the arts; (2) the instrumental use of culture for political or economic purposes; (3) multiculturalism as a threat and/or a promise; and (4) signs of wavering public interest in high culture.

Chairing the morning session, Jeffrey Goldfarb of the Graduate Faculty of the New School pointed out the disturbing fact that even though the 1995 ASA meetings were held in Washington DC, at the very time that Congress was attacking the works of the culture industry and defunding the National Endowments, the ASA itself did little to respond publicly, choos-

ing instead to pursue its usual concerns. Even the Culture Section preferred meaning and measurement rather than react to these attacks. A challenge was presented to the miniconference participants to engage in public discussion of pressing issues facing the conference. Sociologists from the New York area, as well as a considerable number from other parts of the country and Europe, responded to the challenge.

Craig Calhoun, Todd Gitlin and Marshall Berman addressed the problems of the present cultural and multicultural wars. Calhoun presented himself not as a sociologist of culture, but as a culturally oriented political sociologist. He noted that the sociology of culture has been institutionalized in our discipline as having a different perspective from that of politi-

cal culture. As a consequence, he maintained, a broader cultural and cultural political sociology have been left out. He and his fellow panelists moved to right this situation. Calhoun focused his substantive remarks on the problematic bounding of cultures, as if they were homogenous and inherently coherent. He noted that this creates the same sort of problems in discussions about nationalism and multiculturalism. Difference and heterogeneity are lost in the process. To substantiate his position, he drew on his recent research in Eritrea and on the academic inability to distinguish between significant cultural differences and trivial ones in the debates about multiculturalism. He maintained that in the present day cultural wars we can observe a trivialization of cultural differences, which are exacerbated by essentialism, similar to the essentialism of nationalism. Not all assertions of difference are of equal sociological import. Community does not equal Public. Though communities have potential for democracy, the equation of small communities with nation is a mistake. A public requires arenas of engagement of different groups. Some solidarities are needed, but not total homogeneity. But sociologists have become inadequate champions in political arena because of our adherence to "soft relativism." Publics are multiple arenas of mutual engagement in which we interact with others who are not part of our community. We need to have available many forms of mutual engagement in many arenas of political culture.

Todd Gitlin took on this adherence to a soft relativism as he considered the materialist side of the rage against culture. Drawing on his own work on multiculturalism, he observed that those, primarily on the political right, who are morally offended by movies and other forms of commercial culture, and those on the left who subject such culture to political critique, share a joint project of reducing culture to political ends. Gitlin views with equal dismay both forms of instrumentalization of cultural life. This is another chapter in the tension between two views of culture: (1) the anthropological—i.e., as way of life and (2) as cultivation—in the Arnoldian sense. The instrumentalization of culture, further, has its source in the normal workings of the cultural industry, he maintained, which views its cultural products as being no less or more valid than any other product. This accentuates the instrumental use of culture in organization of markets, leading to the fundamental confusions of our cultural wars. For Gitlin, a central case in point is that of multiculturalism. He pointed out that multiculturalism has, in fact, been used by culture industries to organize markets. Market studies for consumer industries lead to multiple languages and segmentation of markets in most product lines. Culture from above is more useable and, therefore, more politically charged. These societal trends dovetail with the discovery of political culture from below. The emergence of Cultural Studies, whose premise is that culture is political, and either hegemonic or resistant, becomes a diversion from political action by focusing on the content of popular song lyrics and other texts. Culture is thus treated as a way of life. But its counterpart is in the ideas of Senator Jesse Helms, the Puritan basis of culture, and recurs in culture wars.

Concerning the culture wars, Marshall Berman pointed out their historical persistence. Classical Greece, one of the most democratic cultures in history, produced Plato and Aristotle, who rebelled against democracy. Yet its basis is Aristotle's idea that public decisions are better than those made in private, and the more people in public, the better. This is his argument against Plato, who thinks philosophers should rule. Berman reminded the conference participants that in the trial of Socrates, Socrates appeared as the most democratic of men. A poor man, like a street musician who depended on contributions, Socrates talked to everyone who passed through the Agora, including even slaves, and expected them to ponder the same ultimate questions—what is the good life, etc. But his judges feared this freedom, certain that it would cause society to fall apart. In reaction, these concerns went underground, and became privatized when Plato founded the Academy, in his orchard, and kept its entrance limited. This may be seen as the establishment of separate hierarchies of discourse, hierarchies which challenge the ideal of democratic culture.

In the afternoon the problem of democratic culture was further examined. The session turned to questions raised by studies of attendance at fine arts events. Richard A. Peterson chaired the session and took Goldfarb's concerns about the attacks on culture as a starting point, asking the session participants to consider: why should the Government support the arts?

Judith H. Balfe and Rolf Meyersohn presented audience research from 1972, 1982, and 1992, some of it based on surveys data and some on interviews, dealing with opera, ballet, art museums, jazz, and media including radio, recordings, and television. These studies seem to reveal a decline in group participation, according to different educational attainment levels. Whereas college education has long been a clear indicator of participation in audiences of high culture, the baby boom generation has not been participating at the expected levels. Rolf Meyersohn provocatively suggested that the shifts in cultural content may be a result of the fact that the Western high music tradition is played out. European art music just may be over. The reported continued rate of high attendance at art musuems lends cogency to his provocation.

Joni Maya Cherbo, who is co-author of two NEA research monographs on the 1992 SPPA data, questioned the interpretation of a growing demise in audiences for the fine arts, especially among baby boomers. Citing responses from the data bank and additional audience data from musical theater audiences, she indicated that, contrary to the others' analyses, there is a significant desire for greater attendance at fine arts events, a strong media participation (TV, VCR, radio) in the fine arts, as well as younger audiences for musicals with age-appropriate programs.

The presentations led to lively discussion with the active participation of the audience. They maintained that interviews showed that those wanting to attend were considerably more numerous than actual attenders; new musical forms are emerging, with increasing crossing over of opera singers into pop

music performance; and that artistic forms have different audience trends: musical theater audiences dropped in a ten year period because of booming costs, union demands, and repertoires. It is clear that most of the fine arts are more costly for audiences, and that the nature of liberal arts education has changed to a far more technically specialized type, one which does not cultivate the appreciation of fine culture.

This led the discussant, Vera Zolberg, to try to answer Peterson's opening question. She maintained that government support of culture is a necessity in a world in which the main alternative is dependence upon the commercial sector. Without such support only the wealthy would have access to a non-instrumental cultural world. By default, the gap between class and mass would be exacerbated, imperiling the very basis of a democratic public.

Do you think we could get the department to declare *post-modernese* an official language?

on the Baby Boom Cohort. National Endowment for the Arts Research Division Report #34. Santa Ana, CA: Seven Locks Press, 1996. Recently published and a hot item: Judy and Rolf wrote the half of this report that got so much coverage in the *NY Times* this Spring (also the *LA Times* and the *Washington Post*) about the declining arts participation of baby boomers.

Streeter, Thomas. *Selling the Air: A Critique of the Policy of Commercial Broadcasting in the United States*. University of Chicago Press, 1996. Recently published in hard- and paperback.

Weintraub, Jeff and Krishan Kumar, eds. *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy*. Chicago, 1997. Cloth and paperback will be available in a few months.

Dissertation in Progress

Daniel Stuhlsatz, Virginia. *Both American and Catholic: the Legitimation of American Catholicism*. This dissertation describes a broad range of legitimating strategies in the American Catholic Church of the last thirty years, as well as some of the institutional effects of specific legitimations. Stuhlsatz develops a concept of legitimation as a pattern of interaction. The study is presented as an example of a theoretical perspective in which cultural objects are studied as interactional structures. E-mail: ds3a@poe.acc.virginia.edu.

News Beyond the Section

Call for Papers. The Annual Conference on Social Theory, Politics, and the Arts will meet October 2-4, 1997 at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. Theme: "Taste Cultures and Contemporary Culture." Papers are welcome on such issues as the politics associated with the variety of taste cultures, and also on the theory, sociology, and politics of the fine arts in general. Deadline for paper abstracts and panel proposals: April 15. Contact Kevin Mulcahy, Political Science, LSU, Baton Rouge, LA 70803. Phone 504/388-2533; fax 388-2540.

Section in Formation. Sociology of Sexualities. This is clearly a field strongly interlinked with ours. If you are interested in joining, sign up on your ASA membership renewal form—but not unless you are also renewing your Culture Section membership!

Call for Papers. Sociological Perspectives is planning a special issue on "Collective Behavior in Postmodern Culture: A Global View for the Third Millennium." They prefer cross-national papers on previously unexamined cases of collective behavior or ones that put CB in an international and postmodern context, and especially desire studies of millenarian movements. Send submissions or questions to George Kirkpatrick or Shoon Lio, Sociology, San Diego State, San Diego, CA 92182-4423; e-mail lio@rohan.sdsu.edu.

Nominations for Section Office, Section Prizes, and Other Culture News

Section Elections: Call for Nominations

We will be electing a new section chair and several council members next spring. If you would like to run, or have people to suggest, please contact the nominating committee chair, Richard Peterson, Box 1635-B, Vanderbilt U, Nashville, TN 37235 (petersra@ctrvax.vanderbilt.edu) as soon as possible.

Section Prizes: Call for Submissions

The Section will award three prizes next summer at the ASA Meetings in Toronto: Best Book, Best Article, and Best Student Paper. The last carries a financial incentive: a $300 reimbursement for expenses attending the annual meeting. For the book and article prizes, work published in 1994-1996 is eligible. For student papers, any work (published or unpublished, but not previously submitted for the same prize) by someone who is a student at the time of submission is eligible. You can submit your own work or nominate that of others. The committees will need four copies of the work (book authors can usually get their publishers to provide free copies for this purpose). Send material by April 1 to the award committee chairs: Best Book: Richard Lachmann, SUNY–Albany, Albany, NY 12222 (RL605@cnsvax.albany.edu); Best Article: John Boli, Emory Univ., Atlanta, GA 30322 (jboli@emory.edu); Best Student Paper: Ewa Morawska, Univ. of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA 19104 (emorawsk@sas.upenn.edu). Awards will be announced at the meetings in August (winners will be notified in advance).

Network News

Culture/Knowledge/Science Network. David Brain, coordinator of this research network, announces the creation of a network web site. It can be found at www.sar.usf.edu/~brain/culture. For more information contact David by e-mail at brain @virtu.sar.usf.edu.

Symbolic Boundaries Network. The network plans to meet in Toronto the day before Culture Day, running several workshop sessions. The topics are still being determined; you can make input. If you wish to do so, or simply want more information on attending the workshops or other network activities, contact Michèle Lamont: lamont@ias.edu.

The Mighty Culture Section—Paper Pulp Industry Complex

Editor's note: This is a new, irregular, feature by which we in the Culture Section can advertise our prolific book-production accomplishments. We will, on request from section members, briefly note book contracts received, new releases, paperback reissuings, and prizes. Send information by e-mail, in the format of the listings below, to the newsletter editor (no faxes or hardcopy). Normally only events in the past six months or so will be covered.

Hays, Sharon. *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*. Yale University Press, 1996. Appeared last summer.

Peterson, Richard A., Darren Sherkat, Judith Huggins Balfe and Rolf Meyersohn. *Age and Arts Participation with a Focus*