

PERSPECTIVES

The Theory Section Newsletter

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EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT "PRACTICING THEORY"

August 10-11—San Diego

"Practicing Theory," a conference sponsored by the Theory Section of the American Sociological Association and the Department of Sociology, University of California - San Diego, is taking fantastic shape. As can be seen on the next page, the preliminary program promises a stimulating time for all theorists traveling to San Diego for this special gathering following the ASA meeting in Los Angeles.

The best public transportation between Los Angeles and San Diego is AMTRAK. The round-trip fare from Los Angeles to the Del Mar station is \$31, and trains run every two hours. On Tuesday, August 9th, trains leave at 2:40 PM, 4:45 PM, 6:25PM, and 9:00 PM. On Wednesday, August 10th, trains leave at 6:40 AM, 8:40 AM, and 10:45 AM. The trip takes about two hours and ten minutes. Harvey Goldman is finalizing arrangements for transportation between Del Mar train station and the conference hotel, even though the hotel itself provides a shuttle service. There will be a table staffed all day on August 9 in the ASA registration area with the most up-to-date information about transportation and other aspects of the conference.

The conference sessions will take place at the UCSD Faculty Club. The official conference hotel is Summer House Inn. A block of rooms has been reserved at the Summer House Inn located at the intersection of La Jolla Shore Drive and Ardath Road in La Jolla. Summer House Inn is close to a beautiful beach and has a top-floor restaurant with breathtaking views of the ocean. Summer House Inn also has a freshwater swimming pool.

The conference hotel is one and a half miles from the UCSD. Buses will run at set times between the Summer House Inn and the UCSD campus. The Summer House Inn is offering those attending the conference single and double rooms at \$67 a night. You each need to make our own room reservation directly with the hotel. The deadline for the guaranteed dis-

count rate is June 30th, but reservations should be made as soon as possible due to the limited number of rooms being held for conference attendees. The hotel number is #619-493-0261. When you call, be sure to mention the ASA-UCSD mini-conference and have a credit card ready to guarantee payment for the room. If you choose to write, the address of Summer House Inn is 7955 La Jolla Drive, La Jolla, CA 92037.

An alternative to the Summer House Inn is the Del Mar Inn, which offers single rooms at \$62 and double rooms at \$72 for UCSD visitors. The Del Mar Inn is an English Tutor Inn located in quaint Del Mar. Its phone number is 619-453-6030; its address is 720 Camino Del Mar, Del Mar, CA 92014. Another alternative is in La Jolla at Inn By the Sea, which is about five miles from the UCSD campus. For UCSD visitors, it offers single and double rates of \$67; Inn By the Sea's phone number is #619-459-4461; its address is 7830 Fay Avenue, La Jolla, CA 92037. Since coastal hotels tend to be booked for August as early as May and these hotels are not holding rooms for us, reservations should be made as soon as possible.

The advance registration fee for "Practicing Theory" is ten dollars. Send your check to—"Practicing Theory," c/o Professor Harvey Goldman, Department of Sociology, Department 0102, University of California - San Diego, La Jolla, CA 92093-0102. Graduate students need not pay a registration fee.

If you have any questions, contact Harvey Goldman at the above address or call him at #619-534-4627; Harvey Goldman's e-mail address is hgoldman@weber.ucsd.edu. If you cannot reach Harvey Goldman, contact Mary Rogers at #904-474-2797 or write at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, The University of West Florida, Pensacola, FL 32514.

Pearls & Scraps

"Perhaps the main principle of the ritual order is not justice but face, and what any offender receives is not what he deserves but what will sustain for the moment the line to which he has committed himself, and through this the line to which he has committed the interaction" (Erving Goffman, "On Face-Work," in *Interaction Ritual* [New York: Patheon Books, 1967], p. 44).

"Well then, said I, when it is not evil as yet, though evil be present with it, this very presence of evil makes it desirous of good, but the presence which makes it evil deprives it, at the same time, of its desire and friendship for good. For it is no longer a thing neither evil nor good, but already evil, and evil, we said, cannot be friendly with good" (Socrates in Plato's *Lysis*).

"A nation that asks nothing of its government but the maintenance of order is already a slave at heart, the slave of its own well-being, awaiting only the hand that will bind it" (Alexis de Tocqueville, *Tocqueville's America: The Great Quotations*, edited by Frederick Kershner, [Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1983], p. 10).

PRACTICING THEORY/PRELIMINARY PROGRAM

August 10

1:00- 2:15

Session I: Seeing Ourselves as Others See Us: View of Users

David L. Collinson, University of Warwick, UK
 Joe Gusfield, University of California, San Diego
 Andrew Scull, University of California, San Diego
 Gerald Doppelt, University of California, San Diego

Session II: The Exemplary Nature of Classical Theory

Organizer: Mark Gould
 Presider: Andrew McLean; Department of Sociology, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA, 90024 USA
 Robert Freeland, University of California at Berkeley
 Marc Schneiberg, University of Arizona
 Ward Breeze, University of California at Berkeley
 Mark Gould, Haverford College
 Commentator: Susan Carle, Washington, DC

2:30-3:45

I. Sociologists as Moralists and Aestheticians

Keith Doubt, Northeast Missouri State University
 Gary Alan Fine, University of Georgia
 Helmut Staubmann, University of Innsbruck
 Bennett Berger, University of California- San Diego

4:15-5:30

I. Publishing Theory

Presider: Michele Lamont
 Panelists:
 George Ritzer, University of Maryland
 Chris Rojek, Routledge
 Peter Bielharz, Thesis 11, Latrobe University
 Alan Sica, Sociological Theory, Penn State
 Ben Agger, Current Perspectives in Social Theory, State University of New York at Buffalo

II. Sociology after Deconstruction

Organizer and Referee: Steven Seidman
 Panelists:
 Richard Harvey Brown, University of Maryland
 Avery Gordon, University of California- Santa Barbara
 Jennifer Lehmann, University of Nebraska
 Charles Lemert, Wesleyan University
 John O'Neill, York University

5:30-7:00 Reception sponsored by Dean of Social Science, UC - San Diego and Walk to Ocean Overlook

7:00-9:00 Buffet Dinner

August 11

8:30-9:30 AM Coffee and Bagels

9:30-10:45

I. Theory in the Experience of Students:

Ann Branamane, Penn State
 Joe Hopper, University of Colorado
 Sandra Godwin, North Carolina State University
 Dan Weber, Princeton University
 David Yamane, University of Wisconsin

11:00-12:15

Session I: Gender Inflections in Social Theory: An Open Discussion on the Exclusion of Women from Theory

Presider: Chandra Mukerji

Session II. Workshop: Detecting Solidarity and Alienation in Discourse

Organizer: Thomas Scheff
 Lunch: Available on Campus

1:30-2:45

I. How We Teach Theory

Craig Calhoun, University of North Carolina
 Charles Camic, University of Wisconsin
 Michele Lamont, Princeton University
 Mary Rogers, University of West Florida
 David Brain, New College

Sessions in development:

"Beyond Theory" with Steven P. Turner, University of South Florida, Harvey Goldman, University of California - San Diego, and William Buxton, Simon Fraser University

"Theory as Critique" with Lauren Langman, University of Loyola at Chicago; Stanley Aronowitz, CUNY-Graduate Center; Douglas Kellner, University of Texas, Austin; Dorothy Smith, OISE in Toronto; and Robert Antonio, University of Kansas.

"Theory as Terror" with David N. Smith, Helen Fein (Genocide), Kathy Blee (Women and the Klan), Greg McLaughlan (The Nuclear State), and Stjepan Mestrovic (Ethnic Cleansing).

THEORY SECTION NEWS

New Editor at ST

The new editor of *SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY* is Craig Calhoun. Until September 1, 1994, continue to send all manuscripts and materials to be considered for publication to the current editor, Alan Sica, at the address printed on the inside front cover of each issue. After September 1, 1994, send all materials to Craig Calhoun, Editor, *SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY*, Department of Sociology, Campus Box 3210, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3210.

More Theory Sessions in L.A.

Session Co-Sponsors: Comparative and Historical Sociology Section and Theory Section

Session Title: **THEORY IN HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY**

Organizers: Ann Shola Orloff, University of Wisconsin, Madison and Theda Skocpol, Harvard University
 President: Theda Skocpol, Harvard University
 Papers:

1. The Theory of Democratization and the Fallacies of Under-Theorized History. Randall Collins, University of California, Riverside.
2. Myth versus Practice in Historical Explanation: A Provocation. Richard Biernacki, University of California, San Diego.
3. The Logic of Small-N Analysis: A Response to Lieberson. Philip S. Gorski, University of California, Berkeley.
4. General Theory and Narrative Method in Historical Sociology. Edgar Kiser, University of Washington, Seattle and Michael Hechter, University of Arizona, Tucson.

Discussion: Jack Goldstone, University of California, Davis

Session Co-Sponsors: Sociology of Culture Section and Theory Section

Session Title: **CULTURE AND THEORY**

Organizers: Michele Lamont, Princeton University and Theda Skocpol, Harvard

University

President: Michele Lamont, Princeton University

1. What is Agency? Mustafa Emirbayer and Anne Mische, New School for Social Research
2. Meaning and 'Interpretive' Cultural Studies in Sociology: Toward a Concept of Practical Meaning. Orville Lee III, University of California, Berkeley
3. Culture(s)' Structure(s). Marshall Battani, David R. Hall, and Rosemary Powers, University of California, Davis.
4. Institutions and Cultural Interlock. Jeffrey K. Olick, Columbia University.

Discussion: Jeffrey C. Alexander, University of California, Los Angeles

Session Sponsor: Theory Section, Open

Organizer: Lauren Langman, Loyola University of Chicago

President: Lauren Langman, Loyola University of Chicago

1. Mannheim's Scientific Politics and Social Dissent: Rational New Dawn or Rational New World Order. Mark Swiencicki, University of Connecticut, Storrs
2. The Dialectical Moment in Modern Social Theory. Peter Knapp, Villanova University
3. Rationality of Power and Legitimacy. Heine Anderson, University of Copenhagen, Denmark
4. The Ends of Social Theory: Postmodern Considerations. Barry Smart, University of Auckland, New Zealand

Discussion: Jacque Mourrain, University of California, Irvine

THE EMOTIONS SECTION CONFRONTS RATIONAL CHOICE THEORY

The Sociology of Emotions Section will devote a special Roundtable session on August 5th, the first day of the ASA meetings, to a consideration of Jim Coleman's 1992 Presidential Address, "The Rational Reconstruction of Society," from the standpoint of emotions. Coleman will appear as a general discussant. The Emotions Section invites all those interested in the Rational Choice position to attend.

THE THEORY PANTRY

James J. Dowd, Department of Sociology, University of Georgia

Pantry. 1. A room or apartment in a house, etc., in which bread or other provisions are kept; also (butler's or housemaid's pantry) one in which the plate, linen, etc., for the table are kept. The word can be used figuratively as Higden once wrote, 1432-1450, "Paradise . . . is the pantrre or place of alle pulcritude."

Theory is well understood as the pantry or place of all ideas and frameworks. Given this, you may share my total incomprehension that some sociology departments have seen fit to reduce or eliminate altogether, the requirement of undergraduate and graduate instruction in theory. My own department, armed with the rationale that the need for a theory requirement has ceased to exist, no longer offers undergraduate theory courses and has drastically reduced its theory offerings at the graduate level.

Theory, like a pantry, is a separate room in the boarding-house of sociology; being separate, however, renders the room neither irrelevant nor unconnected. Its separateness is a matter of focus. There exist theoretical traditions apart from the accumulated facts and understandings that comprise the various substantive subdisciplines of sociology. Theorists borrow from these subdisciplines and extend the ideas which their researches generate. Similarly, at least until recently, it has been the practice in the specialty fields to use concepts and frameworks that have been developed within the different theoretical traditions.

Specialists in the subdisciplines do and must generate their own ideas; they do this naturally, so to speak, as they confront the specific problems and gaps that exist within their limited domains. Theory, however, is a common space and, as such, receives impressions, stimulation, and hypotheses from multiple sources both within and outside of sociology proper. Relying solely on their own concepts and problems, specialty areas become increasingly parochial and self-referential. This may serve to reduce information overload, but the cost is a loss of imaginative conceptualization and bold speculation. Today we face arguments that theory and specialty areas could just as well exist independently and might be better off divorced.

The unsettling aspect to the argument favoring the separation of specialty areas from theory is that it is not unfeasible. Houses no longer are designed with pantries. Pantries may once have been useful but this was long ago, in the era before technology created appliances for cold storage and before suburban modes of living undermined the need for dining room tables. Today we move quickly, travel light, and restrict our reading to waiting rooms, airplanes, and Sunday mornings as we wait for the sermons on the tube to give way to talking heads and long bombs. The decline of theory, in other words, must be under-

stood as part of a more general social change in which technological development has created not only newer modes of communication and leisure, but also newer modes of academic practice. We can indeed manage without theory, maintaining in its place a general viewpoint, a liberal *Weltanschauung* with vague roots in sociology but more direct grounding in the needs of our patron, the modern Welfare-state, for demonstrable results and feasible prescriptions for limiting the encroachment of social problems past city limits, for ensuring the safety of citizens traveling across these limits, and for legitimating our pursuit of popular culture in the dwindling expanse of time we call leisure.

Theory fits poorly, if at all, within this agenda. It is too slow, too "theoretical," for an enterprise that requires fast summaries, methodical procedure, and a fixed format. A feel for theory comes slowly, only after considerable reading and writing. Furthermore, even with the commitment of time to this theory project, a successful or pleasing application of theoretical insight is never guaranteed. Unlike the use of more technical tools of scholarship, the application of theory requires imagination, a feel for language, and an appreciation of abstraction. Theory has uncertain allegiances and a reputation for biting the hand that feeds it. Theory returns continually to issues of resistance, insurgency, and conflict and eschews policy recommendations for the short term. It resists a quick read on a short flight and serves poorly as a text to be kept handy to absorb the snippets of time while waiting for the meeting to begin or the train to arrive.

We continue to produce facts, faster than ever before, but we need to turn to the pantry to make sense out of the numbers and stories. Without theory, research is self-limiting and specialty areas grow moribund. Dissertations become technical exercises and, even when built on the sturdy foundations of ethnographic field work, fail to tell a satisfying story with a clearly developed theme. Without theory, the themes, ideas, and frameworks we draw upon for our research projects grow stale or are transmogrified into contentious, superficial, and ultimately, meaningless wrangling over correct operationalization and other secondary concerns. Without theory, we are unable to answer the basic question of what sociology is all about. Without theory, sociology runs the risk of becoming nothing more than a phonebook of facts and correlations, giving truth to the slipshod wisdom, dispensed by those who lack a more theoretically informed position, that sociology is whatever you want it to be. Without theory, sociology becomes a narrative of adjustment and an apology for the politically feasible. Without theory, the discipline ceases to be filled with interesting tensions at the nexus of science and the humanities.