Perspectives

Newsletter of the ASA Theory Section

A Message from the Editors

This issue is organized around the following premise: empirical investigations that allow room for researchers to be surprised are an important source of theoretical innovation. Although this observation is far from innovative (Merton 1948), and there are undoubtedly other forms of theoretical innovation—such as theoretical integration within the field or the importation of theoretical ideas from cognate fields—we feel the case for a more interactive picture of theory development is once again timely.

Merton (1948: 506) argued that it was imperative to move beyond the simple picture of *logical* interaction between theory and research (where theory is simply used as a deductive engine to generate empirical implications) since this model "fails…to describe much of what actually occurs in fruitful investigation." The reason for this is that by "abstracting from the temporal sequence of events" the logical model tends to exaggerate "the creative role of explicit theory just as it minimizes the creative role of observation." Merton suggests that, "empirical research goes far beyond the passive role of verifying and testing theory: it does more than confirm or refute hypotheses. Research plays an active role."

It would surprise some that Merton would find good company on this point across the Atlantic in France—a setting usually thought to be a haven for theory disconnected from research. As noted by Pierre Bourdieu (1985:11) during the course of discussing the origins of such "theoretical" terms as *habitus* and field, in contrast to "theoretical theory, a prophetic or programmatic discourse which is its own end, and which stems from and lives by confrontation with other theories, scientific theory emerges as a program of perception and of action which is disclosed only in the empirical work in which it is actualized." For Bourdieu scientific theory "…is a temporary construct which takes shape for and by empirical work and which gains less by theoretical polemics than by confrontation with new objects." Both Merton and Bourdieu therefore propose a view of theory that is more attentive to the *temporal* unfolding of the theory development process, rather than settling for a view of theory as a static logical construction.

Using this model of the theory development process as inspiration, we asked our contributors to provide self-reflective accounts of their own attempts to develop and apply theory in their empirical research endeavors. We believe that these contributions do an excellent job of providing the reader with backstage access to areas of the scientific research process that

Chair's Corner

Colleagues,

I invite you to join us on Monday, August 13 and Tuesday, August 14 at the New York Hilton for this year's Mini-Conference on Extreme Theory, the Coser Award Lecture by John Steinmetz, the Theory section roundtables and meetings, and the joint reception of the Theory, Culture and Economic Sociology Section (Monday, August 13, 6:30—8:00). Refer to pages 8 through 10 of this newsletter for the complete program.

~Karin Knorr Cetina, Theory Section Chair and Program Organizer

EXTREME Theory EMEЯTXƎ

AUGUST 13 & 14, 2007

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Theoretically Empirical Writing

Bethany Bryson
James Madison University

When I set out to write *Making Multiculturalism* (2005), I was not especially concerned about ideological gaps between theorists and empiricists. I assumed it was my job to make that connection, and I think my generation of sociologists sees middle-range theory as the expected mode of scholarship. My contemporaries have produced some excellent examples of this kind of research. For example, Courtney Bender is quietly redefining religion with her research on AIDS soup kitchens (2003), Muslim taxi drivers (2004) and the like. It should come as no surprise then that the richness of Bender's ethnography lets us forget that she shakes the theoretical foundations of the sociology of religion. And Kieran Healy's (2006) fascinating study of the trade in human blood and organs simultaneously demonstrates a logical flaw in Titmuss' (1970) classic "Gift Relationship" and suggests some rethinking for organizational and economic sociology.

This doesn't mean that writing a middle-range book is easy. I have a friend (whose middle-range book is now hogging all the sociology prizes) who used to tell me that his manuscript would never be a book. There are challenges. I learned most of what I know about it from Lamont (1992), and from having the benefit of her guidance. I also had to improvise as I went

along, but I didn't consider the gap between theory and data to be the hardest part. My biggest challenge stemmed from the fact that connecting theory and evidence makes far more sense to us than it does to the lay reader.

In one sense, I was unkind to my unsuspecting general public. I opened the book with a sarcastic pipedream that comes directly from the lips of my students who never fail to tell me that they could end all forms of social inequality if they could just get a few good elementary school teachers.

Hope for the future is routinely left at the doorstep of our schools and universities. To policy makers, cultural change seems easy and inexpensive: A brief memo should do it. Teach the children to stop being racist. Make textbooks more inclusive. Expand literary experience. Make well-rounded, deep thinking, culturally sensitive citizens. According to this thinking, all social problems would dissolve in the face of a perfect culture.

Don't worry, I'm still a cultural sociologist. What I do with that is label their lay theory "the myth of omnipotent culture" and connect it to the sorts of theories that fuel most of the plans to save the world through education. It takes me about two pages to explain to the lay audience that my research shows this plan won't work. The goal for any middle range project, then, is to write a study of a gripping social topic that also changes the way

readers think about social life in a more general sense—a study that changes social theory to some extent. In short, this just means that an empirical study can have *implications* for theory.

For me, the difficulty lay in not letting those two goals stray too far apart from each other—in merging the substantive study with its theoretical implications seamlessly enough that readers wouldn't be distracted by the two different goals. This is no small thing. On the one hand, getting these two things together seems to be the secret recipe for really impressive scholarship in our discipline. On the other hand, having two goals at once can make the research and writing process unwieldy. In what follows, I outline my post-hoc recipe and report the rewards and challenges of that process.

**Main Ingredient #1:
A Hybrid Question**

As I saw it, the only way to keep my two audiences interested in each other was to show that they need each other. To do that, I centered my research question on the key principle at the center of debates over English literature. But I struggled to convince my lay audience that the key principle was not race, ethnicity, gender or cultural difference. Instead, I argued, that the crux of the matter was a question of social change and whether cultural change would really effect social change if it occurred in isolation from other kinds of

Bryson, continued

changes. I did that by saying, "I begin from the premise that multiculturalism really could have changed our world." But even a heavy-hitting sentence like that won't stick in the mind of a reader who is only searching for ammunition in a debate so furious and longstanding that people call it a war.

Second, I devised a hook, which I found in the rhetoric of the debates themselves. "Despite the appearance of an epic battle between opposing forces, however, the two 'sides' shared an extraordinary premise: that every time an English teacher put together a reading list, the future of a nation hung in the balance." Then I cited research demonstrating they were mostly wrong about that. This hook allowed me to leverage the debate itself to demonstrate that my research question is important and that readers who have come in search of an answer about which syllabus is better should, perhaps, approach the question in a different way. I could have asked my research question without this little rhetorical trick. I could have simply compared the meanings of something in four different locations with four different social orders. But it was better to study multiculturalism. It was better to study the meaning of a controversial word, and it was better to study a word that people wanted to use to change the world. Still I could have stated the question blandly and ignored the nice connection to the larger debate. If I had done that, I

would not have managed to convince my lay readers that my theoretical question mattered to them. They (the ones who just want to know who is right) want to change or preserve their world by changing or preserving culture. I intended to show them that they need a better understanding of culture if they want to dabble in social change.

Main Ingredient #2: Conscious Methods
I think having a hybrid research question is the most important piece of the puzzle for producing theoretically driven research. Or at least, that's the brass ring. It's

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"I would like to suggest that empiricists spend more time thinking about the theoretical implications of their analytic methods."

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more common, however, for people to talk about this kind of connection in terms of operationalization, so I will focus on an adjacent topic that needs more attention.

Instead, I would like to suggest that empiricists spend more time thinking about the theoretical implications of their analytic methods. For those of you who don't do quantitative research but have some respect for it, I would like to convey the fact that the trade-offs of operationalization are brutally painful for anyone who remains theoreti-

cally conscious during the process (because operationalization is always imperfect). We tend be less conscious, however, when we choose analytic methods. I rarely find that the packaged analytic tools can really ask the questions I want to ask, so my analytic process involves a lot of staring at the computer screen while I try to figure out how to ask the right question of the data.

In this book, I had to figure out how to ask questions about symbolic boundaries in relation to meanings associated with the word multiculturalism. The solution I devised was a modified Venn diagram and a comparative analysis that allowed me to consider the relationship between organizational structures and the boundaries of meaning.

People don't always know what to make of those diagrams. We are more accustomed to frame analysis and unapologetic qualitative interpretation, but I had far too much systematic data for that kind of approach, and I wanted a blinded analytic method that would give me confidence about the sources of error in my analysis. I also wanted a way to summarize a lot of ideas, and I

wanted to depict that graphically. It has been my experience that our discipline has fairly high expectations for operationalization, so we expect custom fit measures (whereas economics and psychology more often prefer familiar measures), but we tend to reject custom-fit analytic approaches, or at least regard them with suspicion. A familiar analytic approach is a safer path, even if it doesn't fit our theoretical models very well, but a good theoretically-driven empirical approach would suggest the need for more creativity.

Main Ingredient #3: A Dash of Applied Research
At this point, however, the general public can be useful because the best way to convince a skeptical sociological audience that a new methodological technique can deliver is to take it out for a spin. Although my primary goal was to use this method for theoretical testing in my four research sites, I also took the resulting schema and used it to illuminate the rhetorical strategies of national figures in the debate. Although this is not what I consider the most exciting "result" of the book (because I was comparing English professors in four different universities to get at causal variables having to do with organizational structure), it is an example of what the method can do. Here's the result:

The "cultural relativism" definition of multiculturalism does begin to reference race and

New Book Spotlight

SOCIOLOGISTS IN A GLOBAL AGE
Biographical Perspectives
Edited by Mathieu Deflem
Published by Ashgate, Aldershot, UK
ISBN: 0 7546 7037 6   Publication date: April 2007

This volume brings together sixteen leading international sociologists to share their experiences of becoming practitioners in the field. Selected for their comparative and transnational interests and experiences, the contributors include: Martin Albrow, Karin Knorr Cetina, Diane E. Davis, Pierpaolo Donati, Leon Grunberg, Horst J. Helle, Eiko Ikegami, Tiankui Jing, Hyun-Chin Lim, Ewa Morawska, Richard Münch, Saskia Sassen, Joachim J. Savelsberg, Piotr Sztompka, Edward A. Tiryakian and Ruut Veenhoven. Each contributor provides an auto-biographical review of their journey into the discipline with special attention paid to the intellectual and social-political contexts in which their work matured. Each chapter concludes with comment on the future direction in which they see their area of sociology heading. These original and reflective contributions provide fascinating insights into the careers of sociologists living in a global age.

Contents

On the Archaeology of the Black Studies Movement

Fabio Rojas
Indiana University

In 1999, I began the project that culminated in *From Black Power to Black Studies: How a Radical Social Movement Became an Academic Discipline* (2007, Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press). The book addresses two questions: Where did the Black Studies discipline come from? How were a social movement's demands assimilated into the higher education system? The evolution of Black Studies is a topic that, until recently, had not received much attention from scholars. There was neither a detailed historical record nor a social scientific literature on Black Studies. To write a detailed treatment, I would assume the role of both historian and sociologist. This essay describes this project's origins, the demands of history and sociology, and how I addressed diverse disciplinary concerns in the writing of the book.

It Starts with Bourdieu

This project began in an independent study course at the University of Chicago in 1998 led by Charles Bidwell and Robert Dreeben. The moment that set me on my course occurred during a discussion of Bourdieu and Passeron's *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture* (1977). My response to Bourdieu and Passeron's argument – that educational institutions recreate class stratification - was skeptical. Studies often show that family socio-economic status has a substantial impact on achievement. Also, historical studies have found that elites come from specific educational institutions. However, I could not uncritically accept Bourdieu and Passeron's basic perspective, which depicts educational institutions as passive elements of a broader political system. In my own brief lifetime, I had witnessed how educational institutions had, at specific moments, generated and attracted conflict, which, in turn, had broader implications for society. Such incidents included disputes over affirmative action in California and Texas, the rise of Islamist colleges in Arabic nations, and the growth of radical student groups in the 1960s and 1970s. In these cases, institutions of higher education played active roles in generating conflict, which resulted in substantial social change. Thus, while reinforcement of class status is an element of most national educational systems, it exists along with tendencies that generate social change.

# Nominations and Membership

Incoming Officers
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We appreciate the work of the 2006-2007 Nominations Committee members:
Murray Webster, Chair, *University of North Carolina at Charlotte*
Ann Swidler, *University of California at Berkeley*
Craig Calhoun, *NYU/SSRC*
Henry Walker, *University of Arizona*
Robert Wuthnow, *Princeton University*

Disagreement with Bourdieu and Passeron prompted me to think about successful challenges to the educational system. I soon decided to study the movement for Black Studies in American universities, which merited attention for a number of reasons. First, it was an example of an educational movement that appeared to lead to genuine institutional change. Not only did the movement result in the creation of specific programs and an entire new field, but the Black Studies movement seemed to be the first step in a broader wave of intellectual change culminating in the rise of multiculturalism and other forms of ethnically conscious discourse. Second, from a professional perspective, it was a relatively understudied movement and, at the time, few other scholars had written detailed institutional analyses. Third, the Black Studies movement in its early days was closely aligned with the broader Black Power movement, a political phenomenon that many scholars believed deserved more attention.

History or Sociology? Or Both?

My doctoral research presents the history and evolution of Black Studies in the context of an argument about the sources of structural change in organizations (Rojas 2003). The Black Studies phenomenon was treated as an example of external political forces interacting with the internal structural features of universities. Once I decided that Black Studies deserved a freestanding examination, I realized that the organizational change framework was insufficient because there was relatively little historical material on the Black Studies movement at the time. A book length treatment would require me to write the history most researchers take for granted. In my case, there was often no literature to cite. The existing literature on Black Studies programs was polemical (Baker 1995; Brown 2006), descriptive of a few programs (Ford 1973), or described Black Studies in only the broadest terms as one outcome of the movements of the 1960s (Van Deburg 1992; for one notable exception, see Small 1999).
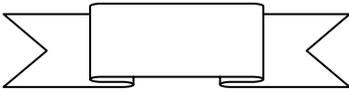
2007 Shils-Coleman Award Winner
WILLIAM WOOD

William Wood (Boston College) has been named the winner of the 2007 Edward Shils - James Coleman Memorial Award for Best Student Paper in the Theory Section of the American Sociological Association for his paper "(Virtual) Myths." This paper examines notions of territoriality and space and calls for a stronger sociological examination of these concepts. The paper fits well with section chair Karin Knorr-Cetina's call for an examination of "extreme theory" at the 2007 meetings because it takes on a largely under-examined sociological issue and makes a profound contribution towards basic conceptualizations of why this issue matters and how it can be studied. As one committee member put it, "The cultural logic is so well captured that it is able to make a convincing argument that geographical mapping of the pre- and colonial era is related to our contemporary mapping of the genome – and that both are practices of control and ordering of the Western culture based on technological/scientific rationality." The paper was published in 2004 in *Critical Sociology*, Vol. 30 No. 4 (July).

Honorable mentions are given to Gabriel Abend (Northwestern), Stefan Kluseman (UPenn), and Isaac Reed (Yale).

The 2007 Shils-Coleman award committee members were Dustin Kidd, Chair (Temple), Vida Bajc (University of Pennsylvania), and JoAnn Brooks (Bentley College).

Rojas, continued

Also, the Black Studies movement operated at the cusp of two different social domains, radical politics and higher education. Thus, any account would have to supplement a story of organizational change with a story of social movements.

Conducting original historical research heightened my sensitivity to the differences between sociologists and historians. In my view, the difference is manifested in two ways – texture and generalization. Historians adeptly create richly textured analyses supported by narrative. With these narratives, historians draw out the differences in behavior across time periods. They also connect research on multiple topics with narrative devices. For example, among American historians, the Black Power movement is often seen as the decline of the Civil Rights movement (e.g., Carson 1995). Sociologists tend to see commonalities across groups and time periods, which requires sacrificing detail, difference and texture. Efforts are made to identify common events, or categorize them via variables.

The difference between sociologists and historians leads to very different situations. The landscape of history is a network of interlocking narratives, each yielding fascinating detail upon closer examination. Sociology's landscape is a collection of variable based cause-effect statements, each supported by case studies and numerical data. The degree to which any person, or research group, accepts these distinctions defines their relative position within the academic system (Abbott 2002).

My project required that I exploit historical and sociological approaches. I needed to present great detail about Black Power and its academic manifestation. Without a textured description of what Black Power meant to student activists, my account of Black Studies would be poorly motivated. Activists would be depicted as passive respondents to social conditions. Furthermore, readers could not appreciate the unusual convergence of political trends that made Black Studies possible. However, too much narrative would cloud arguments about how social movements impact bureaucracies. Overabundant detail would obscure the interesting ties between conflict and institutionalization.

The solution, in my view, was to adopt a developmental model of Black Studies. Drawing on prior research on the adoption of innovation, I presented Black Studies as a historical phenomenon unfolding in a bureaucratic setting. Black Studies was initially a response to the pressing desire for institutional autonomy among radicalized Black activists. Black Studies programs were later changed so that they could accommodate the norms of academia. Thus, each stage in Black Studies' development would be addressed by relatively self-contained and sociologically motivated accounts. Earlier periods would be about mobilization and conflict. Later periods would be about field formation. The description of each stage is organized around a theoretical concept. The massive detail is sorted into narratives about student-administrator conflicts, the stability of particular programs, the intervention of non-academic groups, and the formation of a profession. Thus, my book is not a choice between history and sociology. It's the appropriation of a distinctly historical mode, the chronologically structured network of thick descriptions, for the sociological presentation of a complex event, the transformation of a political movement into an academic discipline.

A Sociological Genealogy

Working through a historical mode of presentation drew my attention to the fact that theory in contemporary sociology has two inspirations: classical scholarship of the 19th century and Merton's essay on theories of the middle range (Merton 1968). In the first tradition, theory is a style of writing associated with deep knowledge of the great humanists. Theory is exegetical and synthetic. It tries to develop wide ranging narratives and concepts. The goal of theory, in this tradition, is to compress an extraordinarily deep textual knowledge into a work that can summarize a lineage of thought. This style of theory is most often communicated through richly argued, but lengthy, essays and monographs.

In the second tradition, theory is a series of statements about very carefully defined social processes, stated as correlations between numerically represented variables. Many of the great triumphs of recent American sociology fit this mold, such as the Wisconsin model of status attainment or organizational demography. The goal, in both cases, is to support a few relatively simple statements with an enormous amount of empirical evidence. Research output is reported in short to medium length articles. Books are often intended as summaries of findings originally disseminated through articles.

Bryson, continued

Sometimes immigration, but it draws a direct line between race and values. By these definitions, any mention of adding "excluded groups" to the canon constituted an attack on core values because, critics argued, the original exclusions were based on values—good values. In this story, excluded groups were excluded on purpose, not because of racism or sexism, but because they didn't measure up to "our" lofty cultural expectations… These cultural-relativism definitions hinge on diversity and value, and they are the sort of definition that attracts charges of racism. Scholarly critics who worried about cultural fragmentation, such as historian Arthur Schlesinger, didn't normally claim that all things "American" (or English, or masculine, or white or Western or whatever) were better than the ideas that had been excluded. That is why Schlesinger could argue that racism was the underlying problem, while D'Souza argued that racism was bunk. D'Souza's most recent (2003) book, What's So Great About America, takes that argument to its own extreme and explains why practicing academics don't use D'Souza's understanding of race and aesthetic value. One need not even buy the book to get his message about just how dangerous multiculturalism is. The jacket reads: "America is under attack as never before—not only from terrorists, but from people who provide a rationale for terrorism. Islamic intellectuals...Europeans... and left-wing multiculturalism—dominant in our own schools and universities—teaches students that Western and American culture is no better than, and probably worse than, Third World cultures." It's the post-9/11 theory of cultural omnipotence: If we don't defend our traditional American culture, we'll be obliterated by terrorists.

Notice that, even though I indulged the lay reader with something from the national level debate, I brought them back around to my theoretical concern—that this theory of omnipotent culture (which probably brought readers to me in the first place) is doing more harm than anybody's syllabus.

Main Ingredient #4: Streamlined Organization

The piece of the middle-range puzzle that I found most challenging, however, was organizing the book. I wanted to write a sleek, streamlined book that addressed a clear theoretically (and socially) relevant question and then set about answering it. But readers kept telling me I would need to spend a few pages providing descriptive background about my substantive topic. A few pages turned into a whole chapter—the deadly chapter two, at one point along with a large portion of the introduction and parts of chapter three. This is the most threatening way in which middle-range projects gain two separate lives. No matter how well integrated one makes the theory and the evidence, readers will need lots of backstory on both, and backstory can kill momentum. When I was revising the manuscript, every reader told me to change the order of the first few chapters. I would do that, then the next reader would suggest that I change it again. That continued until I realized that my problem was that I disliked the "background" material. Therefore, no matter where I put it, it seemed out of place.

The lesson I finally learned, thanks to Sharon Hays, who is genius at middle-range empiricism (see Hays 2004), was that I needed to continuously return to my research question looking for ways to integrate that into everything descriptive and everything that I considered to be an intrusion to my streamlined goals. I had to keep asking myself, why are we here? How can I make this relevant to the research question? That meant that, although a reader had merely asked me to explain some bit of history, I had to do much more. I had to tell that bit of history as a story about the research question. Learning to do that allowed me to integrate the background material into the relevant portions of the book. The extra chapter disappeared.

Closers: Bridging the Great Divide

If there is a gap between theoretical and empirical research in our discipline, I would like to focus our attention away from the alleged "gap" between two small groups of scholars and consider the hundreds of researchers who are doing something else. Many of them are spending years of fieldwork trying to answer the "What's going on here?" question. Others have amassed enormous original datasets designed to find out whether a social good is increasing or decreasing. Most of these folks have been trained to use theory for illumination.

Rather than describing the harm caused by a gap between theoretical and empirical work, I suggest we turn our energies away from the scholars who might be painting themselves into one corner or another and focus, instead, on mentoring students and colleagues who can help to fill-in the space between them.

References

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ASA THEORY EVENTS

THEORY MINI CONFERENCE—EXTREME THEORY

Extreme Culture Theory
  Monday, August 13, 10:30am - 12:10pm in the Hilton New York
  Session Organizer and Presider: Karin D. Knorr Cetina, *University of Chicago* and *University of Konstanz*
  Iconic Consciousness: Meaning and Materiality in the Modern World
    Jeffrey C. Alexander, *Yale University*
  Theorizing the Restlessness of Events
    Robin E. Wagner-Pacifici, *Swarthmore College*
  Panic! A Sociological Theory of Extreme Behavior
    Alexandru Preda, *University of Edinburgh*
  Theorizing Singularities
    Johannes Weiss, *University of Kassel*
  Discussant: Michèle Lamont, *Harvard University*

Extreme Systems Theory
  Monday, August 13, 2:30pm - 4:10pm in the Hilton New York
  Session Organizer and Presider: Karin D. Knorr Cetina, *University of Chicago* and *University of Konstanz*
  Sociological Systems Theory as a Network of Theories
    Rudolf Stichweh, *University of Luzern*
  Snowboarding with Luhmann: The Extreme Sport of Observation
    William Rasch, *Indiana University*
  A History of Difference
    Stephan Fuchs, *University of Virginia*
  The Making of Extreme Theories: How Extreme is the Deconstruction of Social Theory?
    Urs Staeheli, *University of Basel*
  Discussant: Charles Smith, *Queens College, CUNY*

The Future of Extreme Theory
  Tuesday, August 14, 8:30am - 10:10am in the Hilton New York
  Session Organizer and Presider: Karin D. Knorr Cetina, *University of Chicago* and *University of Konstanz*
  Order on the Edge of Chaos
    John Urry, *University of Lancaster*
  Un-commonsensing Sociology
    Andreas Wimmer, *UCLA*
  Towards a Social Aesthetics
    John Levi- Martin, *University of Wisconsin, Madison*
  On the Need for, and Impediments to, Extreme Social Theory
    George Ritzer, *University of Maryland*, Craig D. Lair, *University of Maryland*
  Discussant: Andrew Abbott, *University of Chicago*

Extreme Theory. Formal and Informal Conceptual Architectures in Theoretical Construction
  Tuesday, August 14, 10:30am - 12:10pm in the Hilton New York
  Session Organizer and Presider: Alexandru Preda, *University of Edinburgh*
  Configurations
    Patrik Aspers, *Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies*
  Toward a Phenomenology of Modernity
    John R. Hall, *University of California , Davis*
  The Unintended State
    Chandra Mukerji, *University of California, San Diego*
  Theoretical Unification in Justice and Beyond
    Guillermina Jasso, *New York University*
  Discussant: Michael Lynch, *Cornell University*

ASA THEORY EVENTS

THEORY SECTION OPEN ROUNDTABLES

Monday, August 13, 8:30am - 9:30am, Hilton New York
Organized by Neil Gross, *Harvard University*

Table 1
A General Theory of Institutional Autonomy
   Seth B. Abrutyn, *University of California, Riverside*
A Theory of Open and Closed Ingroup Cues
   Michael Genkin, *Cornell University*
Identity and Meaning in Organizational Networks: Evidence from Fashion Houses and Combat Units
   Victor Pablo Corona, *Columbia University*, Frederic Clement Godart, *Columbia University*
Modeling Power In Exchange Research: From Dyads To Mixed Connections
   Blane DaSilva, *University of South Carolina*

Table 2
Individualism as an Absence of Culture
   Akiko Yoshida, *University of Oklahoma*, Brian Michael Bentel, *East Central University*
Ontological Models in Sociology
   Thomas Brante, *University of Oreho*
The Emergent Sociological Temporalities: A Metatheoretical Examination
   Akihiko Hirose, *University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center*
Toward a Sociological Understanding of 'Quality of Life'
   Leonard Nevarez, *Vassar College*

Table 3
Intellectuals, Movements and the Academy: Building on Frickel and Gross
   Neil G. McLaughlin, *McMaster University*
Parsons, Gouldner and the Sociology of Academic Consensus
   Maxim Waldstein, *University of Pennsylvania*
The Rational and Social Foundations of Electronic Dance Music
   Devin Patrick Kelly, *University of Washington*

Table 4
Alienation and the Corporate Takeover of Culture: Guy Debord's Theory of the Spectacle
   Richard L. Kaplan, *ABC-Clio Publishing*
Post-Societal Analysis: Structuration Theory and Time/Space Categories
   Daniel Gibson Chaffee, *Flinders University*
The Heroism of Modern Life: Charles Baudelaire and the Roots of the Striving Self
   Daniel Silver, *University of Chicago*
Solidarity and the New Intimacy: Individuation and Togetherness in Romantic Relationships
   Daniel Mark Santore, *University at Albany*

Table 5
Embodied Meaning and Social Theory
   Dmitri Shalin, *University of Nevada, Las Vegas*
George Herbert Mead: Early Sociologist of Science?
   Antony J Puddephatt, *Cornell University*
Chance and Social Change: Overcoming the Conservative Nature of Social Institutions
   Jerry L. Williams, *Stephen F. Austin State University*, Robert F. Szafran, *Stephen F. Austin State University*

Table 6
Functional and Causal Analysis in Parsons' Theory of Action
   Helmut Staubmann, *University of Innsbruck*
On the Concepts of Civil Society and Societal Community
   Victor Meyer Lidz, *Drexel University College of Medicine*

ASA THEORY EVENTS

OTHER THEORY SECTION ACTIVITIES

Monday, August 13, Hilton New York

8:30am   Theory Section Council Meeting
9:30am   Theory Section Business Meeting
4:30pm   Lewis A. Coser Award Lecture and Salon
          Hosted in honor of 2006 Coser Award winner George Steinmetz, Professor Sociology at the University of Michigan. Steinmetz's lecture,
          "Social Theory and Colonialism: Understanding Empires, Past and Present," deals with the ways sociologists have theorized colonialism
           and other forms of empire to argue that the uniquely sociological contribution to this area consists of theorizing the colonial state
           as a social battlefield with unique stakes and forms of prestige. The lecture is followed by a salon.
6:30pm   Reception hosted with Economic Sociology and Culture sections

NON-SECTION THEORY ACTIVITIES

Saturday, August 11, Hilton New York
Open Refereed Roundtables: Theory I
2:30pm - 4:10pm
   Session Organizer: Viviane Brachet-Marquez, *El Colegio de México*
   Diversity and Postmaterialism as Rival Perspectives in Accounting for Social Solidarity: Evidence from Opinion Surveys
       Jan Germen Janmaat, *Free University*
   Impure Utopia: Towards a Relational Conception of Civil Society and Counterhegemonic Mobilization
       Istvan Adorjan, *Yale University*
   The Struggle for Recognition in the Scientific Field: With Special Reference to the Scientific Misconduct of Hwang Woo Suk
       Leo Kim, *Goyang, South Korea*
   Unpacking Institutional Bricolage
       Guilhem Bascle, *HEC (Paris)*
   The Development of the Consumer in Ireland, 1900-1980
       Paddy Dolan, *Dublin Institute of Technology*

Open Refereed Roundtables: Theory II
2:30pm - 4:10pm
   Session Organizer: Viviane Brachet-Marquez, *El Colegio de México*
   Treating the Subject: Toward a Psycho-Interactionist Theory for Ethnography
       Christian J. Churchill, *St. Thomas Aquinas College*
   Deleuze, Machines and Social Control
       William C. Bogard, *Whitman College*
   Causation, Emergence, Level and the Importance of Theoretical Viewpoint
       Kevin Payne, *Park University*
   Durkheim on Rationality
       Sandro Segre, *State University of Genoa, Italy*
   A Theory of Spatial Hysteresis
       Elizabeth K. Thorn, *University of Maryland*
   The Evolution of Bourdieu's Theory of Culture: From Relativism to Universalism
       W. David Gartman, *University of South Alabama*

Tuesday, August 14, Hilton New York
Regular Session: Theory
8:30am - 10:10am
   Session Organizer: Kyriakos M. Kontopoulos, *Temple University*
   Presider: Douglas V. Porpora, *Drexel University*
   An Evolutionary Approach to Social Life: Toward Pragmatist Methodology of Social Sciences
       Osmo Kivinen, *University of Turku*, Tero Piiroinen, *Research Unit for the Sociology of Education, University of Turku*
   Multilevel Analysis versus Doctrinal Individualism: The Use of the "Protestant Ethic Thesis" as Intellectual Ideology
       Ronald L. Jepperson, *University of Tulsa*, John W. Meyer, *Stanford University*
   What is Institutional Analysis?
        Marc Garcelon, *Middlebury College*

THEORY PRIZES FOR OUTSTANDING ARTICLES

2007 Theory Prize Winner
Jeffrey Alexander

In his article, "Cultural Pragmatics: Social Performance between Ritual and Strategy," published in Sociological Theory, 2004, Alexander presents a theory of cultural pragmatics that brings meaning structures, contingency, power, and materiality together in a new way. He argues that the materiality of practices should be replaced by the more multidimensional concept of performances. Drawing on the new field of performance studies, cultural pragmatics demonstrates how social performances, whether individual or collective, can be analogized systematically to theatrical ones. After defining the elements of social performance, eh suggests that these elements have become "de-fused" as societies have become more complex. Performances are successful only insofar as they can "re-fuse" these increasingly disentangled elements.

2006 Theory Prize Winner
Karin Knorr Cetina and Urs Bruegger

Recognized for their article, "Global Microstructures: The Virtual Societies of Financial Markets," published in the American Journal of Sociology, 2002, Karin Knorr Cetina and Urs Bruegger use participant-observation data, interviews, and trading transcripts drawn from interbank currency trading in global investment banks to examine regular patterns of integration that characterize the global social system embedded in economic transactions. To interpret these patterns, which are global in scope but microsocial in character, this article uses the term "global microstructures." Features of the interaction order, loosely defined, have become constitutive of an implanted in processes that have global breadth. This study draws on Schutz in the development of the concepts of temporal coordination as the basis for the level of intersubjectivity discerned in global markets.

Because no Prize was awarded in 2006, the section officers voted, on a one time basis, to award two article prizes in 2007: one for the 2006 period (beginning in 2002) and the other for the 2007 period (beginning in 2003).

Ethnography of Silence

Michael Pagis
University of Chicago

Though two years have passed, I vividly remember the first time I arrived at a joint Vipassana meditation sitting to conduct participant observation.

To avoid misunderstandings I should begin by saying that this joint meditation sitting was not my first encounter with this field of research. I had already participated in a ten day Vipassana meditation course, held in the Vipassana meditation center in Israel. Yet, I had found that the ten-day course is a relatively thin environment for fieldwork. While spending ten days on site, there was little material for notes. First, the courses are standardized – the spatial arrangements, the schedule and meditation instructions remain invariant from course to course – so a single account serves to describe them. Second, because the ten days are spent in complete silence, each person to himself, there is almost no social interaction to record. As a sociologist, trained to look for the social, I was searching for a sphere rich with information, one that would serve as an entry to the world of meditation. When I heard about group meditation sittings held in an apartment in Tel Aviv, I immediately thought this could be the sphere I was looking for. I was therefore excited about the prospect of meeting practitioners and introducing myself, and looked forward to witnessing some sociality in the upcoming meditation sitting.

It was evening, around seven fifty, when I entered the apartment. The

meditation was supposed to start at eight, so I was ten minutes early. A young woman, in her early thirties, opened the door for me and I entered a narrow hall. She then disappeared into a second room. I looked around. On the wall I noticed a bulletin board with a few announcements and explanations about meditation courses. There was also a small bench suited for two and next to it a book shelf with books about meditation and Buddhism. Having no other chair in sight I sat on the small bench, and looked at the entrances of three rooms. The entrance to one room was covered with a blue cloth, just like the meditation hall in the meditation center. The door to another room was closed. The third room was lit, with its door open – this was the room into which the woman has disappeared. I peeked inside and saw a few computers, two young men, and the woman who opened the door for me. All three seemed very busy – one was talking on the phone, while the other two worked on the computers. It didn't seem appropriate to enter, so I decided to wait and see what other newcomers would do. Shortly after, a few people came in. One woman looked through the door of the room and said hello to one of the workers inside; she seemed to know him. The other newcomers just took off their shoes and waited quietly standing. I was surprised to see that no one introduced herself to me, or gave me the opportunity to introduce myself. I started to get a bit nervous, not just because I felt my research was at stake, but because it was an awkward social situation to which I wasn't accustomed. Still, I was optimistic; knowing the importance of silence in this meditation scene, I convinced myself that this silence would be limited to the few minutes

An Uneventful Journey to the Dustbin of History: Historical Events and Relations in the Construction of Networks

Simone Polillo
University of Pennsylvania

I must confess I began my archival research on late 19th century Italian central banking without having a clear idea of what I was looking for. While historians are constrained by expectations that they will investigate events within a clearly delineated era, as a historical sociologist, I was investigating an abstract process and felt neither the burden nor the guidance of such constraints. The archive of the Bank of Italy is massive, though incredibly well structured and almost fully digitalized. The awe-inspiring effort of the archivists to make the material accessible only added to the sense that something fundamentally important was hidden there. The means to find that "something" were at my disposal; nonetheless, the archive would just not speak for itself. I found myself relating to the ethnographers I'd known who'd described their sense of drowning in their data accompanied by a dread that they may not be able to discern any patterns whatsoever.

Sometimes moments of disintegration turn out to be just that, moments of disintegration, but other times such moments become creative openings. In this case, drowning (or more literally, sneezing) in the archive became the latter. Like an ethnographer, I became interested in developing a deep sense of the dynamics, tacit rules, and emotional strategies involved in the development of central banking in Italy. Paradoxically, applying this frame to an historical context forced me to bracket off the assumption that an archive is a collection

of *events*. This change of perspective may seem deeply counterintuitive and a-historical, but I think there is a large theoretical payoff to ignore events, at least *temporarily*.

An event-centered analysis looks for details: exactly how did such and such event happen? An event-centered research strategy makes cross-references among folders within different boxes. It makes connections across different parts of the archive, complements them with secondary literature, and possibly other archival sources. But archives also contain long, sustained exchanges among few actors, such as private correspondence, or internal organizational-meeting minutes. Sometimes these exchanges are completely removed from the "reality" of events "out there". Rather, they respond primarily to matters that are only relevant to an ongoing, private conversation.

This is what I mean by non-historical: the relationship between private conversations and events is itself a variable. Without claiming originality to this point, I would argue that conversations (and their close cousins such as private correspondence, personal narratives etc.) have dynamics that are interesting by themselves, without the need to appeal to an external referent, and that such dynamics can be studied using network methodologies. Furthermore, conversations are constitutive of networks, which means that rather than an event-oriented strategy, we can thus follow one oriented by relations as they develop over time. By assuming only a loose-coupling between private interaction and

Rojas, continued

From Black Power does not draw primarily from either of these traditions because it is a sociological genealogy, which means that it uncovers the sources of an academic discipline by situating a particular discourse within the contexts of the Black Power movement and the American university. The goal is not to synthesize prior social thought, or to show correlations between clusters of variables, though statistical evidence is presented to support certain claims. Instead, the book shows the connections between a body of discourse and its institutional environment. The book's ethos is close to what Foucault describes in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), which construes his writings as illuminations of a constellation of thought, including its discontinuities and contradictions, as well as its connections to society. *From Black Power* does not present a complete mapping of the Black Studies discipline, but it does show the field's roots in civil rights politics, the movement for black autonomy in the 1970s, and how its embedding in the university caused a shift in framing, rhetoric and organizational form. I also argue that absorbing Black Studies changed American higher education by creating a permanent space inside central social institutions for radicalized thought, a space I call a "counter center." Furthermore, the acceptance of Black Studies by elite universities legitimized minority centered discourse outside Black Studies programs. The genealogy of Black Studies uses ideas from American sociology to describe the changing connections between a discipline, the movement that spawned it and the institution that houses it.

From Black Power's dual approach to theory and evidence is an analysis of political-intellectual processes within the framework of a sociological genealogy. The exploration of particular processes, such as the molding of Black Studies so it would be accepted, satisfies the imperative to develop "theories of the middle range." The chronological presentation of these events and arguments heightens the intrinsic interest of the case, especially to readers interested in the origin and outcomes of the Black Power and Black Studies movements.

Lessons Learned from the Writing of *From Black Power*

It is worth thinking about the lessons for those interested in *From Black Power's* style of empirically grounded work. First, I would suggest that any theoretically oriented scholar approaching historically grounded work start with well justified prior assumptions and avoid the "grounded theory approach," if that means beginning with minimal prior beliefs. Work addressing complex social processes, such as the interaction between academia and its challengers, generates voluminous documentary material, as well as data collected by the researcher. Without some limits, the researcher might be encouraged to endlessly collect more data. In my case, well intentioned observers suggested that I focus more on Black Studies courses, or on the social history of the movement. These are laudable objectives, but pursuing them would have moved me away from the general theoretical goal, which is to understand how political challenge initiates bureaucratic and disciplinary processes in the university system. If I did not begin with a firm commitment to the intersection of social movement research and organizational analysis, I might never have been able to establish reasonable limits on this project.

Second, scholars engaging in this kind of research should heed Charlie Parker's dictum: "Don't play the saxophone. Let it play you." That is, don't be overly insistent on forcing a complex historical process into a predetermined format. The richness and drama of the events should motivate the project's theoretical development. Black Power's impact on the university is salient to political sociology and organizational theory, but it also touches on issues in related areas such as American politics and educational history. While it would be overly challenging to completely address all these issues, any treatment omitting these topics for the sake of theoretical parsimony will leave the reader feeling that much more needs to be said. Ideally, this sort of research requires a balance between well defined professional goals and a faithful engagement with the social world.

A Reflexive Conclusion

In the end, I come back to Bourdieu, who reminded us to maintain a reflexive stance (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). The engagement with a "theories of the middle range" perspective reveals my professional history. Trained in an American sociology program, I was well acquainted with theories that could help me organize the substantial archival, interview and statistical data that I collected. For example, the resource mobilization perspective in social movement scholarship provides a way to situate my topic as an extension of prior thought on protest movements; evidence from the Black Studies movement could be used to show what happens after the period of open conflict. Thus, *From Black Power* develops two intellectual agendas that have been of growing interest in American sociology, an interest in political mobilization and organizational field formation.

> *"I would suggest that any theoretically oriented scholar approaching historically grounded work start with well justified prior assumptions and avoid the "grounded theory approach," if that means beginning with minimal prior beliefs."*

The insistence on Black Studies' specifically, and the Black Power era more generally, indicates my personal commitments. Though I had no prior connection to Black Studies programs or the Black Power movement, I believed this was an important story to tell. Black Studies' history is salient to scholars seeking to link institutional theory and social movement research, but any treatment that completely subsumed the story of Black Studies into an exploration of institutional theory was a disservice. The Black Studies phenomenon was an example of people asserting their interests within the institutions serving them, an event that deserves serious examination.

My balancing of theory, method and evidence depends not only on intellectual concerns, but also on professional history and personal stance. This approach to my work is akin to DuBois' writing, which is not overtly labeled as "theoretical," yet managed to derive important scientific insights from extended engagement with concrete historical cases. Though this may deviate from the view that sociological advances come primarily from exegetical and synthetic exercises, or from correlations between variables, it allows for a blending of theoretical development and empirical detail in the service of intellectual aims.

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Polillo, continued

"Sometimes moments of disintegration turn out to be just that, moments of disintegration, but other times such moments become creative openings."

external "events", researchers can bring a new perspective to questions about the role of interpersonal interaction in historical moments. For example, understanding whether ignorance of outside events is just that – or whether it is a symptom of deceit, manipulation, or carelessness. Let me develop this point through my own examples.

The Bank of Italy has a number of internal departments and offices, and the personal secretariat of the General Director (what today would be the Governor) recorded exactly the kinds of documents that are most appropriate for a relation-oriented, rather than an event-oriented strategy. (These documents have already been used, although less systematically, by an eminent, now deceased, Italian economic historian. I was kindly alerted to their existence by another historian of liberal Italy, Douglas Forsyth). Between 1900 and 1913, the Director, Bonaldo Stringher, engaged in a long correspondence with the head of the biggest commercial, private bank of Italy, Otto Joel. In the institutional context of pre-WWI banking, the two men were formally rivals because the central bank was a for-profit, private institution, in spite of its privileged ties with the Treasury (Incidentally, this was true of pretty much all central banks in that historical period). However, the private nature of the central bank was being gradually transformed by its relation with the State: profit often was foregone to allow for the stability of the system, which required numerous last-resort-type, and unprofitable, rescues of financially fragile banks. How did the Director of the Bank of Italy construct and negotiate the emerging public role for his institution in his correspondence with a rival whose cooperation he needed? In turn, how did the private banker, Joel, balance his collaboration with the Bank of Italy, which offered increasingly important connections to the State, with the demands of his bank's shareholders? In other words, how did those involved construct, negotiate, and reproduce the boundary between public-good-oriented action and the pursuit of private interests?

Joel and Stringher were bankers, so in retrospect it seems only natural that they would use the medium of money. Through their correspondence they discussed how to market the government's repeated issues of debt, how to convince foreign investors of the soundness of Italian national credit, how to spread the use of banknotes in the South of Italy as opposed to coin, and so forth. But their conversations about money were not about money as a singular entity. They talked about different *streams* (or as Viviana Zelizer would put it, circuits) of money and how they *should* be used. Thus while they worked out the practical details, they were developing a shared economic *morality*, which entailed segregating certain legitimate financial operations, such as buying government securities from others, such as speculating on the stock exchange, and building moral networks in which certain monies could safely circulate by creating alliances with banks that were most closely connected with local elites. Weber once wrote that money is the weapon in the "struggle of man against man" for economic existence. In this context, money was a moral token as well – and its power derived from the capacity of these actors to claim morality for their uses of money. As Bourdieu would have it, competition was being translated into, and regulated through, distinction.

By focusing on relations rather than events, I shifted attention away from the contingency of historical events toward actors' repeated attempts to reproduce a stable social order. Contingent events certainly played a role in the development of central banking in Italy, as undoubtedly they do in all other social processes. But by shifting the focus of my investigation to the ways in which relations unfolded over time, my analysis details *how* contingent events entered these actors' narratives and conversations.

Following sustained exchanges among a few actors over a certain period of time can be a way to cut through the complexity of the external context, while saying something meaningful about the evolutionary dynamics of networks. In other words, I suggest a focus on a "micro" level of recorded interaction (which certainly for micro-sociologists will not be micro enough, but that's as micro as it gets in historical research). This in turn may allow the analyst to reconstruct the macro processes that also shaped

Pagis, continued

left before the beginning of the meditation. After the meditation I would surely get the chance to witness some social interaction.

Then I heard a gong, and everyone entered the big room serving as a meditation hall. I followed, and sat on one of the blue cushions. The next hour passed nearly in complete silence. During the first few minutes, some chanting and meditation instructions were played, but the rest of the hour-long meditation sitting was silent. At the end of the hour, after several minutes of chanting, I saw people getting up. I waited until a few meditators stepped out of the meditation room, and then followed them into the entrance hall. I watched in surprise as they put on their shoes, some said a general good bye, others not even that, and left the apartment. After a few minutes I realized that my participant observation was over, it was time to go home.

As I discovered later, the meditation session described above is not unique in its lack of socializing. In fact, when mediators begin to host a group meditation session in their homes, the first instruction they are given is to avoid from turning the session into a social gathering. When I asked a meditation teacher, I was told that meditation sittings are for meditating, and if people want to socialize, they can do it in their free time. Indeed, I soon found out that most practitioners have little contact with other practitioners, and a large majority do not have close friends who meditate. For most practitioners, meditation was experienced as an individual matter.

Not yet entirely discouraged, I found my way into the few existing social settings - among volunteers at the center, at organization meetings, or at the registration committees. But here too I felt dissatisfied; although these spheres included conversations, they were not the rich field site I was looking for. While this was the perfect place to learn about the organization and the way it works, it certainly wasn't the ideal place to study self and subjectivity. I heard conversations about courses, the meditation center, teachers, about the family, daily life or work, but nothing about the practice of meditation. In fact, the one time I did hear someone talking about her meditation experiences her initiative was not welcomed and quickly died out.

It took me a while to realize that this silence is an important norm within this meditation scene. The lack of spheres to socialize, which I described above, does not stand alone – it goes hand in hand with a general taboo regarding conversations about meditation experiences. In contrast to what I expected from a westernized version of Buddhist meditation, the "twelve-step" culture did not enter the scene. No one asked one another "how was your meditation?" Sharing intimate inner states was just not the thing to do.

This silence, I later discovered, followed an important Buddhist principle: talking about and sharing meditation experiences is believed to have a negative effect on the practice of meditation. When one shares, one begins to compare, and thus might start desiring or expecting specific meditation experiences. Yet meditation is not about expectations – it is about accepting the present as it is. When one expects and desires, the whole point of meditation is missed.

As an ethnographer this was extremely frustrating. Trained to observe social interactions or record conversations, I could not find a public sphere with a discourse on meditation. It took me a while to realize I was not the only one who was frustrated. One day I came out of the meditation apartment after a one hour group sitting, with two other practitioners to whom I offered a ride; Dina, a more senior meditator who volunteers at the meditation organization, and Yael, who did a

few courses but this was her second visit to the meditation apartment (I quickly realized that offering rides was my best opportunity to socialize and to obtain a few names for interviews). Another woman whom I'd never seen before walked in front of us. She seemed to be in her forties, had short black hair, and was walking briskly. When she got to her car, she suddenly turned around to face us. With an urgent voice she began talking:

"You were there too, right? How was it for you?"

"The meditation, you mean?" answered Dina in a surprised tone.

"Yes, the meditation – were you able to do it? To do Vipassana I mean?"

Still surprised by the question, Dina answered that it depended, that it was sometimes difficult for her to concentrate. The woman then continued:

"You see, I did my first course just a few weeks ago, and it takes me thirty minutes to get here, and then find parking and everything, and then when I get here I sit and I just can't concentrate – and I can't even follow my breath, not to say doing Vipassana, and I wonder if this is worth it, I mean, what is the point of coming here if I can't do Vipassana…"

Here Dina answered that sometimes even one minute is worth while, and that she should probably talk to one of the teachers. The woman's answer was:

"The teacher – how is he? I mean, he was sitting there like a statue… and you know, I already asked one teacher and got an answer, so what's the point of asking another one?"

> *"My goal while conducting research would no longer be to battle silence and enforce communication, but to decipher the puzzle of how people maintain a subjective world in a setting with little social interaction and hardly any open inter-subjectivity. This puzzle opened new ways of theorizing about the self that were previously unavailable to me."*

I remember how I empathized with this woman. She wanted to know the other meditators, to see what they were experiencing and if what she was experiencing was normal. Unable to participate in a conversation of this sort in the meditation apartment, she took it out into the street. And the answer she received was terse, to say the least: it is worth coming anyway, and if she needs advice, she should ask a teacher. From the woman's answer it was clear that she didn't want to ask a teacher – she wanted to hear from fellow meditators what they thought and how they felt. And yet, though Dina's answer was short, the woman ended the exchange by stating that she was glad to hear that perhaps other people had problems concentrating as well. Still, I couldn't help noticing her unsatisfied and helpless expression, as she entered her car and left.

This incident was a turning point in my research. Finally I understood that the frustration I was feeling was shared by others. My goal while conducting research would no longer be to battle silence and enforce

Editors, continued

seldom appear in the final product (book or journal article), but, that if we follow the above reflections, are crucial for determining the shape and content of that final product. The contributions are divided between two retrospective accounts that look back at a finished piece of research, by Bethany Bryson and Fabio Rojas, and two accounts by budding researchers who are in the "middle" of the research process, Simone Polillo and Michael Pagis. All four contributors are young and active scholars, and as such we believe provide a revealing snapshot ("in action") of Merton and Bourdieu's reflections in the current context.

We hope that you find these essays illuminating and thought provoking. We also encourage you to compose thoughtful responses and share them with the editors. We may make use of some these responses in later issues. We also want to take this opportunity to request your contributions to future issues of *Perspectives*. Tell us about your work in progress; respond to recent comments on your work; or experiment with a new idea that you are playing with. Submissions should be sent to Erika Summers-Effler at eeffler@nd.edu. We look forward to your submissions!

-- Dustin Kidd, Erika Summers-Effler, Omar Lizardo, Editors

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Polillo, continued

the micro exchanges by asking: What narrative strategies persist over time? When do narrative styles change? When, how, and why do actors invite their correspondents to "backstage" performances? When is the boundary between the intimate and the official transgressed?

By devising a network strategy, I turned my initial question (the development of central banking in the context of state building) into a more specific one: under what conditions do financial networks successfully claim moral legitimacy for their operations? Legitimacy is, however, a very slippery concept; it is not clear that it does more than provide post-facto rationalizations for action that did not work, which brings in once again the hard test of meeting a "reality out there" at some point. However, one could ask: under what conditions are such rationalizations required and articulated? I think archival material – recorded over time, involving well-defined actors, or even better, *actors in the process of defining themselves* – can be a wonderful source to get to these dynamics.

My research suggests that in the specific case of the development of central banking in Italy, action is constructed as "not working" in the flow of interaction. Responsibilities for failure are assigned over repeated exchanges, and an actor's ability to monopolize certain sources of morality (certain streams of money being an important part of that) gives him/her an advantage to make his/her definition stick.

Pagis, continued

communication, but to decipher the puzzle of how people maintain a subjective world in a setting with little social interaction and hardly any open inter-subjectivity. This puzzle opened new ways of theorizing about the self that were previously unavailable to me. How do we create a sense of inter-subjectivity in silence? How can we sustain a life world with little social support?

These questions led me to examine the processes through which silenced inter-subjectivity is produced in meditation courses, in group sittings, and in everyday life. It made me realize how focused I was on open speech and verbal expression. I also realized that this was the

general tendency of many recent empirical studies of selfhood - we place too much emphasis on language and communication. Maybe biased by our talking culture, we assume the adequacy and exhaustiveness of communication as a model for social interaction. But what happens when this communication model is found to be inadequate?

Finding an answer to this complex question will probably occupy me for most of my career. Offering a tentative hypothesis, I would contend that silence can be considered from two different perspectives. Intuitively, those of us raised in modern, western cultures tend to see silence as an obstacle to creating inter-subjectivity. Silence keeps us constantly in doubt regarding the experience of others and the uniqueness of our own experiences. Yet, I was also surprised to find that silence may sometimes serve as an important facilitator for inter-subjectivity, for a silenced inter-subjectivity that is interrupted by open-speech. I discovered that for many meditators inter-subjectivity is a default situation. By projecting their experiences on others, meditators assume that everybody goes through similar experiences. From this perspective, open verbal sharing leads to the disappearance of a shared inter-subjectivity and to an extreme emphasis on the uniqueness of individual experiences.

These considerations pave the way for many other fascinating theoretical questions – how do people divide their experiences into self and other, unique and shared? How do they draw the line between the subjective and the inter-subjective? The answers to these questions will shed light on hidden aspects in the continual production of inter-subjectivity, and may lead to a better understanding of the dialectic movement between the individual and the social world.

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