

Perspectives

Newsletter of the ASA Theory Section

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Review: *Studies in the Theory of Action*

Bruce Wearne, *Point Lonsdale, Australia*

This three-volume series, edited by Helmut Staubmann (*Universitat Innsbruck, Austria*) and Victor Lidz (*Drexel University*), intends to stimulate study of the theory of social action, disseminating important documents of its immediate past history, while also publishing the results of more recent reflection. The first two volumes are reviewed here. A third volume in the series, *Essays in the Theory of Action*, by Victor Lidz (ISBN 978-3-8258-7501-6) will be published soon.

Helmut Staubmann (ed) Action Theory: Methodological Studies LIT Verlag Wien 2006 (Studies in the Theory of Action, Volume 1) ISBN 978-3-8258-7502-4

The editors of this series intend to publish new work while also ensuring that unpublished or writings not readily available and of significance for the development of Action Theory are distributed as widely as possible. The series is strong evidence of the intention of both scholars to ensure that scientific debate about the contribution of Talcott Parsons (1902-1979) is critical, well-informed, open and fresh. The volumes give expression to their recognition of recent developments and possibilities in book publishing, having found a publisher who produces quality material at an affordable price. The layout and production of the first two volumes is attractive, modest and user-friendly.

Volume One is composed of 8 pieces. Helmut Staubmann's "Rethinking the Frame of Reference of Action Theory" serves

as a brief Introduction and he also concludes the volume with his stimulating piece, translated from the German: "The Affective Structure of the Social World - Repairing a Blind Spot in Luhmann's Sociology with Parsons' General Theory of Action." This brief and suggestive comparative discussion of how the theories of Niklas Luhmann and Parsons relate to sociology's "blind spot", raises critical questions about sociology's possible "essentialism". Staubmann cites Luc Ciompi "No-one can deny that emotional factors play an important role in social life" and yet "The blind spot of sociology with respect to emotions is not merely its lack of an account of emotions, but primarily its conception of emotions as something pre-social or pre-cultural and thus its failure to recognize their genuinely social character" (207). Affectivity, says Staubmann, is a "structurally independent component of communication/action". Luhmann, on the other hand, allowed his anti-essentialism to be compromised by conceiving of emotions as part of what constitutes the social system's environment (209). The essay is richly suggestive of further critical theoretical investigation and debate, and Staubmann extends Parsons' theory by an appeal to Parsons' own concept of an emerging system - in his terms: "the mutual irreducibility of action components" (p. 222), requiring conceptual differentiations between interdependent systems which in Parsons' own terms are "conceived to be autonomous relative to each other" (p. 8). Staubmann's contribution is a notable extension of Parsons' theory of action, which as with the crisp and accessible language of Bernard Barber, avoids *(continued on page 6)*

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Qualitative Sociology Symposium: "Pragmatism and Ethnomethodology"

Krista Shackleford, *University of Toronto*

The pragmatist maxim invites theorists to reflect on the following: "Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object" (Peirce, 1992 [1878]: 132). Peirce's words, and the pragmatist theory that developed with his guidance, remind us that our understandings of the world must be united with an appreciation for how our theories might impact society. This reminder has become particularly salient in light on the "pragmatist turn" occurring within sociology (c.f., Misak, 2007; Ansell, 2009; Gross, 2009).

A recent symposium in *Qualitative Sociology* contributes to this renewal of pragmatist conversation by sketching out some affinities between pragmatism and ethnomethodology. The symposium's foundational piece is "Pragmatism and Ethnomethodology", written by recent *(continued on page 4)*

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The Michigan Workshop in Social and Sociological Theory: Report on the first year

George Steinmetz
University of Michigan

I initiated this workshop in order to bring together philosophers interested in the social sciences and social philosophy with theorists from fields like sociology, anthropology, political science, and history. The guiding idea behind the workshop is that the richest periods in sociological history (as at the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research and the Heidelberg Institute for State and Social Sciences before 1933) involved intense interaction between philosophy and the social sciences. So far, these hopes have been borne out. The regular participants in the Michigan workshop in social theory this year include philosophers Elizabeth Anderson and Dan Little, political philosophers Lisa Disch and Lawrence Scaff, the cultural anthropologist Webb Keane, and sociologists Jean-Louis Fabiani, Robert Jansen, Muge Göcek, Margaret Somers, and Mayer Zald, as well as Michigan sociology graduate students Avi Astor, Jose Bortoluci, Mariana Craciun, Matt Desan, Ryan Gittins, Asli Gur, Claire Herbert, Camilo Leslie, and Atef Said. Two of the presentations, by Lawrence Scaff and Jean-Louis Fabiani (this year's annual exchange professor from the Paris École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales and the Central European University

in Budapest), consisted of chapters from books that appeared this year: Fabiani's *Qu'est-ce qu'un philosophe français: la vie sociale des concepts (1880-1980)* (*What is a French Philosopher: The Social Life of Concepts (1880-1980)*), and Scaff's *Max Weber in America*. The workshop also provided the launchpad for bringing the philosophers Anderson and Little into the Michigan sociology department, where both now have courtesy appointments. Whereas Little studies sociologists in order to discern the epistemological and ontological premises underlying their work, Anderson is interested in studying sociological research on egalitarian social movements as part of her new project on egalitarianism--an introduction to which she presented in the workshop. Our most recent presentation was a paper on a hermeneutic approach to the problem of agency by Andreas Glaeser (Sociology, University of Chicago). The workshop's final visitor this year will be the Lebanese-Australian social theorist and anthropologist Ghassan Hage (University of Melbourne), who is the author, most recently, of the books *Against Paranoid Nationalism* (Pluto Press) and *Waiting* (Melbourne University Press). Financing for the social theory workshop came from Mayer Zald's "Intersections" project, which is dedicated to bringing together the social sciences and the humanities.

ASA Theory Section award winners announced

The 2011 **Lewis A. Coser Award for Theoretical Agenda-Setting** has been awarded to Phillip Gorski (*Yale University*). The award is given annually to a mid-career sociologist whose work sets the agenda in the field of sociology. Gorski will deliver the Coser Lecture at the ASA meetings in August 2012.

The 2011 **Theory Prize for Best Recent Paper** has been awarded to Stephen Vaisey (*Berkeley*) for his outstanding article, "Motivation and Justification: A Dual-Process Model of Culture in Action" (*AJS*, May 2009).

The 2011 winner of the **Shils-Coleman Award** for Best Student Paper will be announced soon.

Young Theorists Spotlight



Daniel Huebner is a fifth year graduate student at the University of Chicago where he earned his masters in 2008. He is the student co-editor of the *American Journal of Sociology* and has also served on the manuscript and book review boards. He is one of the preceptors for the undergraduate program in sociology and Chicago and teaches the department's "senior seminar." He has also been a lecturer in the undergraduate college, teaching the "Self, Culture, Society" sequence that introduces students to foundational authors in the social sciences. In addition to classical and contemporary sociological theory, his research interests include the history of the social sciences, the sociology of knowledge, cultural sociology, and historical/archival research methods.

Dan's dissertation utilizes the prominent, century-long history of knowledge produced about Mead, as extensively preserved in archival and other primary materials, to examine the nature of academic knowledge in a unique way. His work addresses questions including how authors come to be considered canonical in particular disciplines, how academics understand and use others' works in their research and scholarship, and how claims to authority and knowledge are made in scholarship. One of the most distinctive aspects of utilizing Mead as a case through which to investigate these issues is that the boundary between studying the intellectual development of his philosophy and studying the under-

standings others have produced of him is immediately problematic. *Mind, Self, and Society*, the most influential document of Mead's philosophy, was put together by former students in an attempt to posthumously preserve their understandings of what was most important in his philosophy, and in life, the development of Mead's philosophy was also conditioned by his students, colleagues, and others, with whom he sought creative and ongoing dialogue. The seemingly contradictory status of Mead's philosophy – at the same time individual and communal – provides the opportunity to acutely examine the social nature of knowledge production. Hence, his dissertation does not aim to be either an intellectual biography or a study of canonization or intellectual reputation alone, rather the task of dynamically relating others' knowledge of Mead to his own self-understandings is central to his work. His work contributes to sociological theory both by reconceptualizing a classical author and by examining the social nature of social scientific knowledge.



Camilo Arturo Leslie is a PhD candidate at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He has also recently completed a JD at the University of Michigan Law School. His research interests cut across Legal Sociology, the Sociology of Trust, Economic Sociology, and Cultural Sociology.

Camilo's dissertation research examines a recent Ponzi scheme—the Stanford Financial Group fraud—and compares the situations of U.S. and Venezuelan depositors who invested their savings with that firm. The dissertation, tentatively titled "The Tangled Roots of Trustworthiness: A Comparison of U.S. and Venezuelan Investment in the Stanford Financial Fraud," identifies trustworthiness as a multi-layered social effect that results from a combination of interpersonal relationships; the material and symbolic self-presentation of firms; the legal, political, and institutional context of firm-client relationships; and transnational economic phenomena. As against existing theories of trust, which tend either toward the psychological or the thinly schematic, he conceptualizes trustworthiness as joining various levels of social reality, from the macro-institutional, to interpersonal relationship networks, to the affective and phenomenological.

His dissertation is based on fieldwork conducted in Caracas, Venezuela, and the southern United States, areas with the highest concentration of defrauded Stanford investors. Camilo analyzes civil and criminal court filings; regulatory reports; the lobbying and organizational efforts of victims' rights groups; Stanford's marketing materials; English and Spanish press accounts; as well as interviews with roughly 100 defrauded investors, former Stanford financial advisors (whose position combines traits of both victim and perpetrator), and an assortment of financial services professionals, academics, and regulators. Preliminary analysis suggests that a mix of nationally-specific and transnationally-operative factors combine to create the effect of trustworthiness that leads investors not only to fraudulent financial services firms but to legitimate ones as well. Nationally-specific factors, however, shape the process of its creation and its ultimate character.

His previous research includes a theoretical work on the relevance of cartographic imagery to the nationalist project (entitled "Mapping the Nation, Placing the Subject: Cartographic Imagery and the Territorial Ideology of the Nation-State"), and a socio-legal analysis of the Civil Rights Act Debates of 1874-1875, both of which he is currently preparing for submission to sociological journals. He has presented work at the annual meetings of the American Sociological Association, the Association for the Study of Nationalities, and the Law and Society Association.

Camilo's graduate studies have been supported by several University of Michigan fellowships and grants, as well as the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship, the Ford Foundation Predoctoral Fellowship, and, most recently, the American Bar Foundation Law and Social Science Dissertation and Mentoring Fellowship.

Book Note: Max Weber: Readings and Commentary on Modernity

Donald A. Nielsen

State University of New York Oneota

Sociologists interested in Max Weber can count themselves fortunate these days with the recent appearance of the second revised edition of Stephen Kalberg's new translation of Weber's work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Oxford University Press, 2011). Kalberg's volume gives us not only a complete and more precise translation of Weber's revised 1920 text, containing his mature views of a thesis originally broached in two lengthy journal articles of 1904-05, but supplements this classic work with new translations of Weber's closely related essay on "Church and Sect in America", excerpts from his "last word" of response to his critic Rachfahl, an important selection on Protestantism and capitalism from Weber's final lectures on "General Economic History", and Weber's "Prefatory Remarks to the Collected Essays on the Sociology of Religion". Readers interested in going further and placing Weber's "Protestant Ethic Thesis" in the context of his other writings may consult Kalberg's collection, *Max Weber: Readings and Commentary on Modernity* (Blackwell, 2005).

In addition, Kalberg provides a revised and expanded, and very illuminating, introduction to these texts, along with a substantial bibliography of writings about the "Weber thesis" and a glossary of key ideas used by Weber. Readers, especially students, will find this glossary particularly valuable. It helps to define the central reference points for understanding Weber's overall theoretical framework and method of analysis. As an aid to the twenty-first century reader, Kalberg has also inserted many footnotes to Weber's text. These identify and explain terms, events, persons and other items mentioned in passing by Weber, things which Weber could expect his readers to know, but which are largely inaccessible to current audiences.

Those teaching upper division undergraduate and graduate courses in social theory or the sociology of religion will find this volume an ideal introduction to Weber's work and to the continuing controversies surrounding his famous thesis. At \$14.95 in paperback edition, it is more than worth the price.

Shackleford, continued

Coser-award winner Mustafa Emirbayer and ethnomethodologist Douglas Maynard. In pragmatist fashion, I want to express some of the practical benefits this symposium might make to sociological theory. James might ask about the "cash value" of this symposium: "What difference would it practically make to any one if this notion rather than that notion were true? (1981, 26). I offer two reasons as to why theory veterans and novices alike will benefit from reading this work. In addition to underscoring the resurgence of popularity that pragmatism has enjoyed in the last two decades; this symposium is a prime example of the high-quality theoretical discussions happening beyond the realms of "pure theory". Lamont (2004) has noted that the line between "theoretical producers and consumers" (14) is increasingly blurred, as both camps are increasingly integrating the empirical with the theoretical. This symposium is a prime example of this sociological overlap.

"Pragmatism and Ethnomethodology" rests upon the argument that eth-

nomethodology can extend the empirical possibilities implicated by the work of classical pragmatic theorists. Emirbayer and Maynard note that the Peirce, James, and Dewey all articulated the importance of connecting theory with empirical investigation. However, while all of these philosophers were "passionate believers in modern science" (222), their work was generally devoid of empirical investigation. Besides the obvious example of symbolic interactionism, few empirical research programs have been developed in light of pragmatist ideals.

In light of this disconnect between practice and theory, Emirbayer and Maynard offer ethnomethodology as an avenue for empirically pursuing pragmatist goals. In particular, they draw linkages between ethnomethodology and three facets of pragmatist thought: the call for a "return to experience", the process of creative problem solving, and the contribution of language to problem solving and maintenance of social order. Emirbayer and Maynard begin by sketching out these three components of pragmatist thought, and offer a bio-

graphical overview of Garfinkel's intellectual relationship with pragmatism. Ultimately, Garfinkel concluded that pragmatists reified the concept of "social role", bypassing investigations of "real interactions" for more theoretical pursuits. However, Emirbayer and Maynard contend that some themes addressed in Garfinkel's work coincided with three aspects of pragmatist thought discussed earlier. Emirbayer and Maynard devote most of their piece to identifying pragmatist affinities that appear in Garfinkel's work – affinities that I will discuss here only briefly. First, Garfinkel's "members' methods" provided a "systematic charting of lived experience" (236), adding empirical strength to the "return to experience" advocated for by the pragmatists. Second, Garfinkel's breaching experiments were developed in order to disrupt the taken-for-granted nature of interaction – to create, as Addams would phrase it, "perplexity". While Addams and Garfinkel focused on different contexts, both were profoundly interested in how people react when taken-for-granted expectations are put to the test. Ethnomethodology outlines practices, such as "ad-hocing", (*continued on next page*)

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that emphasize the contingent and the creative ways in which actors coordinate with one another and attempt to solve problems in their environment. Third, Garfinkel's work reflects an interest in language and signs that was shared by the pragmatists. Ethnomethodology, and conversation analysis in particular, shift the study of language into the domain of social science, capturing "how participants in interaction actually talk" (253). While the overlap between ethnomethodology and pragmatism is in no way complete, both traditions emphasize the processes through which language facilitates creative problem solving, and contributes to the lived experiences of social actors.

What practical consequences have generated from this work? In pragmatist fashion, "Pragmatism and Ethnomethodology" has "called forth" (Joas, 1996) responses from scholars engaged with these areas of sociological inquiry. From the field of ethnomethodology, John Heritage joins the conversation by discussing ethnomethodology's potential for deepening pragmatist understandings of "emergence". He attributes to ethnomethodology the important insight of making change, rather than stability, "the presuppositional foundation for the analytical treatment of language, culture, and action" (268). The inevitability of change, in a sense, is the only stable phenomenon we can count on. Heritage takes "Pragmatism and Ethnomethodology" as a foundation upon which to build a nuanced discussion of typification, as found in Husserlian phenomenology and Wittgenstein's philosophy of language. Ethnomethodologist Anne Rawls responds to Emirbayer and Maynard's work by addressing their intellectual biography of Garfinkel. While she concedes that Garfinkel's work contributes to the work of pragmatism, she emphasizes the fact that Garfinkel himself never accepted pragmatism as a guiding force when formulating his own theoretical position. Moreover, she critiques the claim that Garfinkel's work was deeply influenced by phenomenology. Rather, she accentuates the fact that Garfinkel was "a creative theorist in his own

right" (pg. 278), and that his work should be understood as a unique theoretical perspective rather than a development of earlier theoretical traditions.

Pragmatists Quere and Terzi respond to Emirbayer and Maynard by addressing how pragmatist theory might contribute to ethnomethodology's understanding of "experience". In doing so, they emphasize pragmatism's commitment to public problems and experiences, noting that this emphasis could help broaden the "strictly limited corpus of data" to which ethnomethodologists are constrained when analyzing political processes. They propose a greater emphasis on pragmatism's application to public problems, suggesting Dewey's political theory as a possible link between ethnomethodology, with its "strictly limited corpus of data" (274), and the analysis of public problems and experiences. Winship and Muller echo this interest in the pragmatist drive to solve "practical problems" (285), and remind the reader of this fundamental focus of early classical pragmatism. They contrast the classical pragmatist engagement with "progressive politics" with the relative political indifference of ethnomethodology, noting that the latter tradition might benefit from reflecting on the practical implications of their work.

All four responses have generated new ideas and understandings about the affinities that exist between pragmatism and ethnomethodology – as well as how the two traditions might learn from one another. In response to these responses, I feel compelled to clarify what I felt were the theoretical parameters of Emirbayer and Maynard's work. It is important to take Emirbayer and Maynard's piece in the spirit in which it was intended. Rawls' knowledge of Garfinkel's intellectual biography is extensive, but I question whether her argument about Garfinkel's intellectual roots truly addresses the thrust of Emirbayer and Maynard's argument. Emirbayer and Maynard do not claim Garfinkel as a pragmatist; rather, they sketch out some of the similarities (and differ-

ences) that exist in their comparative approaches. Moreover, to acknowledge Garfinkel's foundational knowledge of phenomenology and pragmatism is not to diminish the uniqueness and creativity inherent in his work. As Rawls asserts, Garfinkel may not have subscribed to any particular theoretical perspective but his own – but this does not preclude the possibility of early influence from other areas of sociological and philosophical work. In addition to this clarification, I must address the concerns expressed about the limited emphasis placed on the public and political ramifications of pragmatism. While Emirbayer and Maynard acknowledge the importance of pragmatism's practical mission, a close engagement with this element of pragmatism falls outside the parameters of the paper. The authors aim to examine elements of pragmatist thought that have been "empirically underdeveloped" (223) – a goal that prevents a more thorough examination of pragmatism's political implications.

"Pragmatism and Ethnomethodology", in concert with the symposium published in *Qualitative Sociology*, has generated new theoretical understandings into conversations in the pragmatist and ethnomethodology communities. It also provides a prime example of theoretical reconstruction, defined by Habermas as "taking a theory apart and putting it back together again in a new form in order to attain more fully the goal it has set for itself" (95). Theoretical reconstruction sharpens and revises theories in need of clarification, and identifies theoretical potential that has not yet been explored. By facilitating conversations between sociologists from different "theory satellites" (Lamont, 2004), this symposium identifies opportunities for theoretical reconstruction and reformulation that might not emerge in isolation. As James might put it, the symposium has great "cash value" – both for experienced scholars looking to explore new theoretical interpretations, and theory novices first venturing into the world of theory reconstruction. This symposium highlights how discussion between sociologists from diverse theoretical backgrounds can generate productive and thoughtful conversations.

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Wearne, continued

unnecessary conceptual clutter while pinpointing an "essential principle of theory construction" basic to Parsons' oft-times difficult-to-penetrate formulations.

The other essays are: Thomas J Fararo "On the Foundations of Action Theory: Four Imperatives", Victor Lidz and Harold J Bershady "Parsons' Tacit Metatheory", Guiseppe Sciortino "Toward a Structural Theory of Social Pluralism: Talcott Parsons, Ethnicity and Ascriptive Inequalities" and David Sciulli "Reformulating Parsons' Theory for Comparative Research Today. These all, in various ways, continue the critical examination of Parsons' action theory, and indicate its possible value for contemporary sociology.

Fararo continues his metaphysical interpretation of Parsons' action theory. Though this theory is conceived as an analysis distinct from philosophy, it repeatedly makes its own incoherent contribution to metaphysical reflection. Fararo suggests that this is part of the ambiguous longer-term contribution to sociology of Parsons' action theory, particularly of sociology that is framed by a debate over the idealizations of Coleman's rational choice theory. Lidz and Bershady also expound Parsons' metatheory but, unlike Fararo, they are not so focused upon its perceived shortcomings and ambiguities. They trace his complex formulations in terms of his comprehensive account of an emergent social reality provoked by, among so many others, L. J. Henderson, A. N. Whitehead and W. B. Cannon. They provide a cogent and comprehensive exposition of its ongoing significance for the ongoing disclosure of a general theory of action. They also provocatively open up a discussion that may shed light on Parsons' *reluctance* to discuss the meta-theoretical side of his project which is somewhat dissonant with Parsons' career-long efforts to advance all kinds of knowledge by means of the concepts of the action theory itself. Lidz and Bershady have certainly confirmed an important reflexive and self-critical dimension of action theory in their contribution. Sciortino reminds his readers that Parsons' indisputable commitment to civil

rights was basic to his theoretical grasp of the meaning of ethnicity with "a very different vision of the relationship between modernity and ascriptive categories (and solidarities)" (p.158), a social pluralism that involves "the building of an overlapping and nested network of crosscutting solidarities" (171). In fact, it is the emphasis upon the necessarily normative dimension of action which allows the theory of society to remain alert to "the dark side of differentiation and modernity" (173). Sciulli's search for a reformulation of Parsons' AGIL scheme in order to facilitate comparative research in a global perspective, steers clear of dogmatic Parsonsian apologetics, on the one hand, and any self-interested radical dismissal on the other. "We are now too busy for either type of interruption. We are reading Parsons dispassionately, with an eye to mining his AGIL scheme for its utility *today* in orienting detailed comparative study of all economically advanced societies... Parsons' AGIL schema, we propose, contains a nascent undeveloped theory of democratic, competitive society that potentially is grounded against relativism" (180-181). On reading this, I was reminded of the way some prominent evolutionary biologists remain committed to applying Darwin's CVST algorithm (Competition, Variation, Selection, Transmission) so that the most comprehensive view of the living world can come within the purview of empirical analysis. Sciulli puts his non-dogmatic and empirical aspiration in similar terms: "We say potentially here because its status as a grounded theory of social change needs to be demonstrated, not simply asserted" (181). Here too we see similarities with Fararo's metaphysical interpretation which, finding inspiration in Whitehead, is similarly engaged in the formulation of four-fold formulae or algorithms which account for processes in the evolutionary "spirit of unification" (103).

The largest essay of the volume is one initially written in 1969-1970 by Talcott Parsons himself. In "Talcott Parsons' The Sociology of Knowledge":

Introduction Comments", Victor Lidz informs us that this fifty page essay, "The Sociology of Knowledge and the History of Ideas", was initially written for the *Encyclopedia of the History of Ideas* (which presumably became *The Dictionary of the History of Ideas*) but without ever reaching publication. But then, with the urging of Mark Gould, Parsons took up contact with a British publisher with the result that he intended to expand it into a full length monograph. This took place in the 1970s, while he was also trying to finish an initial draft of *Toward an American Societal Community* (published in 2007 as the *American Society: a Theory of the Societal Community* ed. G Sciortino). So this essay was initially written, but lay dormant, in the midst of a busy schedule maintained right up until Parsons' death in May 1979. The essay is important, indicating that the ongoing interpretation and evaluation of *The Structure of Social Action*, and its most important place in the disclosure of sociological theory on the western side of the North Atlantic (but not only there), has to keep in mind Parsons' intense interaction with Heidelberg neo-Kantian philosophy and the intellectual, cultural and political ferment which coincided with German society in the 1920s. In many respects, Karl Mannheim seems to have functioned for Parsons as a symbol of the problem of sociology within the European cultural milieu. Lidz's introductory essay is rich with comparative insight, describing Parsons' appropriation of Mannheim's sociological concepts, while dissenting from it in basic terms. In brief, says Lidz, Mannheim simply "strayed too far from the clear paths of Weber's methodology" (18). Criticism of "the overly relativistic foundation that Mannheim had given to the field" (19), Parsons had nevertheless become an advocate of the sociology of knowledge as a specialized field.

This is a volume that makes a significant and critical contribution to action theory. Though further critical comments cannot be advanced here, *Action Theory: Methodological Studies* is evidence of an ongoing critical appropriation of Talcott Parsons' contribution to sociology.

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Wearne, continued

Talcott Parsons Actor, Situation and Normative Pattern: An Essay in the Theory of Social Action edited by Victor Lidz and Helmut Staubmann LIT Verlag, Wien 2010 (Studies in the Theory of Action, Volume 2) ISBN 978-3-8258-7500-8

This is the second volume of *Studies in the Theory of Action* which, by making new material available, encourages further critical examination of Talcott Parsons' contribution to sociology. *Actor, Situation and Normative Pattern* is a vital document for charting Parsons' complex theoretical development after *The Structure of Social Action* (1937). It is a 1939 initial formulation of Parsons' action theory which would come to a mature form in "Values, Motives, and Systems of Action", an essay written in collaboration with Edward Shils and James Olds in *Toward a General Theory of Action* (1951), and *The Social System* (1951). In his preface, Victor Lidz tells us that it served as a working document which Parsons shared with graduate students and colleagues.

... for ten or eleven years, the essay had been the chief sequel to The Structure of Social Action, acting as a technical source on Parsons' theory of social action (2).

Moreover, this publication is also Lidz's contribution to the legacy of his teacher.

It thus partially addresses what many scholars have found to be one of the most intriguing mysteries in the development of Parsons' thought, namely, as to what were the intermediate developments in theory that led him from the very basic conceptual scheme ... to the more elaborated schemas (2-3).

It was not intended as a full empirical elaboration of the envisaged theory. The long-term goal was to set up a comprehensive system of variables [Parsons T 1937a:751]; here a start is made and the focus is upon the "theory itself".

The object of the present essay is to attempt a systematic and generalized statement of the theoretical system without critical references.... it will be confined

to a brief statement of the frame of reference and an outline of the structure of systems [32].

The initial chapter of "Actor, Situation and Normative Pattern" is entitled: "Frame of Reference". It relates Parsons' view of what he had achieved in *The Structure of Social Action* and what at that point still remained to be done.

... there is something to be said for an attempt to outline this structure directly without reference to the critical context which was necessarily so prominent in the book [pp. 31-32].

Lidz notes that in this work, moreso than others, Parsons presented his ideas in a methodical way, outlining the steps he had to take and "with greater clarity than in most of his later theoretical works" (3). This essay helpfully illuminates aspects of Parsons' theoretical development before establishing himself as an "incurable theorist". But how do we understand this greater literary clarity at this earlier stage? Should literary clarity decrease as theoretical insight deepens? Does this greater clarity reflect Parsons' concern to communicate with his graduate students, whereas later works were written with a wider, more diffuse readership in mind? Lidz's pertinent observation should be kept in mind as this volume is read and interpreted. Parsons admitted that he tended to write first to allow what he had written to become the basis for his ongoing re-thinking of a particular theoretical issue as he edited his own formulations. His own theoretical writings became the object for his own action, his subsequent reflective analysis.

As for Volume 1 in the series, the critical apparatus for Volume 2 continues to demonstrate the same editorial care. One slight quibble would be that the original page numbers of the typescript could have been inserted into the text without much difficulty. This would have been convenient for those who have already subjected the document to critical scrutiny; in fact there have been a significant scholarly interest in Parsons' papers in the Harvard Archives. If there are plans for a reprint

then this minor adjustment could be made without too much trouble. Lidz in his informative Preface tells us how he, as editor, has handled what is to him a most important document for assessing Parsons' theoretical development and achievements.

In preparing the manuscript, we have used a carbon copy of the original typescript that Parsons apparently kept for his own use. It includes a number of handwritten corrections and marginal notes in Parsons' own handwriting. I have edited the manuscript lightly, changing few words, allowing many instances of Parsons' unusual grammatical constructions to stand, but altering punctuation for clarity in many places. I have left the pronoun "he" to stand for an individual actor, regardless of gender, in the standard usage of Parsons' time. The many partial reference have been completed, but I have limited them to editions that were available to Parsons at the time of writing rather than inserting references to current or at least more recent editions. This is especially true of works of Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, that were only available to Parsons in German and French... (pp. 3-4).

The publication keeps as close as possible to the original typescript that Lidz had located after searching through filing cabinets located in various places, eventually being found in the basement of the home of Helen Parsons. Lidz was then acting as executor of Parsons' literary estate. Having such a responsibility can be a heavy burden and Lidz has continued to honour this scholarly responsibility by bringing this important essay to publication, along with some other of Parsons' publications that he has facilitated over the last three decades.

It is slightly ironic that this English edition of Parsons' essay should now be published in Vienna, albeit with Transaction as its American distributor. The irony deepens when it is noted that this publication follows the 1986 German translation, *Aktor, Situation und normative Muster* published in Frankfurt am Main by Suhrkamp having been prepared by Professor Harald (continued on last page)

Theory Section Announcements

Theory Section Events at ASA

Junior Theorists' Symposium, Friday, August 19

The Theory Section of the ASA invites you to attend its annual Junior Theorists Symposium, co-organized by Tom Medvetz (*University of California, San Diego*) and Michal Pagis (*The Hebrew University of Jerusalem*). The JTS is an exemplary occasion for nurturing the development of "theory"-oriented work in US sociology. The conference brings together scholars at a relatively early stage in their careers who are engaged in original theoretical work as part of their ongoing research. The event has become a juggernaut since its humble beginnings in 2005. This year we received almost 90 submissions from 7 countries. This year's themes will be *Action & Interaction*, *Economy & Culture*, and *Morality & Politics*. Andrew Abbott (*University of Chicago*), Viviana Zelizer (*Princeton University*), and Loic Wacquant (*University of California, Berkeley*) will serve as discussants. The registration deadline is July 15. For a registration form, please email Michal Pagis at michalpagis@gmail.com.

Theory Section Roundtables, Monday, August 22, 8:30—9:30

Table 1. Advances in Metatheory	Table 7. Interaction, Performance, and the Self
Table 2. Classical Theory and Contemporary Sociology	Table 8. Networks
Table 3. Culture and Society I	Table 9. Religion, Meaning, and Ethics
Table 4. Culture and Society II	Table 10. Organizations
Table 5. Democracy and Social Organization	Table 11. Theorizing Capitalist Societies
Table 6. Governmentality, Technology, and Resistance	Table 12. Core Antinomies in Philosophy and Social Theory

Theory Section Paper Sessions

Sociological Theory and Organizations, Monday, August 22, 10:30—12:10

Organizer: Victoria Johnson (*University of Michigan*)

Emily Anne Erikson (*Yale University*), "Formalist and Relationalist Theory in Social Network Analysis"

Ezra W. Zuckerman (*Massachusetts Institute of Technology*) and Robert F. Freeland (*University of Wisconsin*), "Managerial Control is Alienating and Inefficient So Why do Firms Dominate the Capitalist Economy?"

Karin D. Knorr Cetina (*University of Chicago*), "Theorizing the Market as an Organization outside Organizations"

Josh Whitford (*Columbia University*), "Waltzing, relational work and the construction (or not) of collaboration in manufacturing industries"

Sociological Theory and Race, Class, and Gender, Tuesday, August 23, 8:30—10:10

Organizer: Amy C. Wilkins (*University of Colorado-Boulder*)

Discussants: C. Shawn McGuffey (*Boston College*) and Sinikka G. Elliott (*North Carolina State University*)

Nicole Rousseau (*Kent State University and Howard University*), "Historical Womanist Theory: Re-Visioning Black Feminist Thought"

Sarah Malone Smith (*University of California, Irvine*), "Prisons and Publics"

Diane M. Grams (*Tulane University*), "Public Parades as Urban Ritual or Performance?"

Mark Gould (*Haverford College*), "The Poverty of Cultur(al) Analysis"

Sociological Theory and Inequalities, Tuesday, August 23, 12:30—2:10

Organizer: Mara Loveman (*University of Wisconsin-Madison*)

Discussant: Shamus Rahman Khan (*Columbia University*)

Mathieu H. Desan (*University of Michigan*), "Bourdieu & Capital"

Bowen Paulle (*University of Amsterdam*), "The ongoing reinforcement of inequality: Embodying race, ethnicity, nationality, and gender in high poverty schools"

Kelly Moore (*Loyola University-Chicago*) and Catherine Gillis (*Loyola University-Chicago*), "Beyond the Market: Food Cultures Among the Poor"

Ashley E. Mears (*Boston University*) and Noah McClain (*New York University*), "The Privilege of the Perk: A Theoretical Agenda for Everyday Affordance of Class Position"

Lewis A. Coser Lecture, Salon and Reception, Tuesday, August 23, 4:30—6:10

Presider: Phillip Gorski (*Yale University*)

Award Winner and Lecturer: Rogers Brubaker (*UCLA*)

Upcoming Theory Conference

The University of Chicago will host a conference, "Georg Simmel: Life, Self, Culture, and Society," on Nov 11-12, 2011. For further info, contact Donald N. Levine at dlok@uchicago.edu.

Members' News and Notes

New Publications

Books

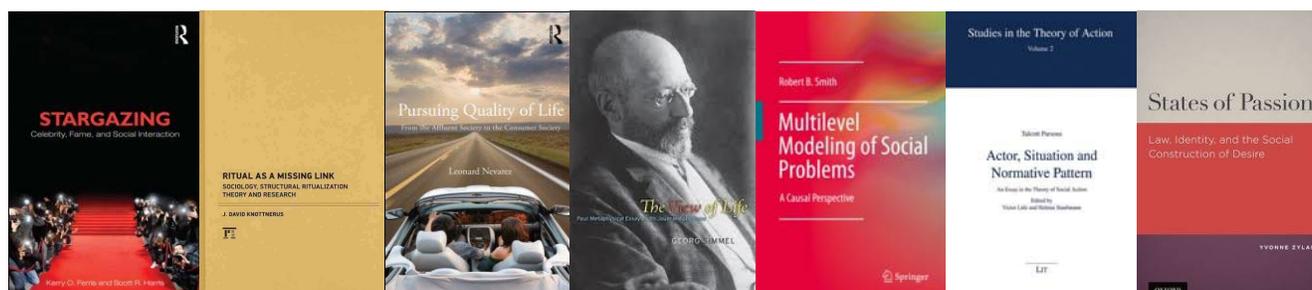
- Ferris, Kerry O.** and Scott R. Harris. 2010. *Stargazing: Celebrity, Fame, and Social Interaction*. Routledge.
- Knottnerus, J. David.** 2010. *Ritual as a Missing Link: Sociology, Structural Ritualization Theory, and Research*. Paradigm Publishers.
- Lidz, Victor and **Helmut Staubmann** (eds.) 2010. *Talcott Parsons: Actor, Situation and Normative Patterns. An Essay in the Theory in the Theory of Social Action*. Vienna: LIT.
- Nevarez, Leonard.** 2011. *Pursuing Quality of Life: From the Affluent Society to the Consumer Society*. Routledge.
- Simmel, Georg. 2011. *The View of Life: Four Metaphysical Essays with Journal Aphorisms*. Translated by John Andrews and **Donald Levine**. University of Chicago.
- Smith, Robert B.** 2011. *Multilevel Modeling of Social Problems*. Springer.
- Wiley, Norbert,** Joseph B. Perry, Jr. and Arthur G. Neal. 2011. *Uprising at Bowling Green: How the Quiet Fifties Became the Political Sixties*. Paradigm Publishers.
- Zylan, Yvonne.** 2011. *States of Passion: Law, Identity, and Social Construction of Desire*. Oxford.

Articles

- Abramson, Corey M.** and Darren Modzelewski. 2011. "Caged morality: Moral worlds, subculture, and stratification among middle-class cage-fighters." *Qualitative Sociology* 34:143-175.
- Abrutyn, Seth** and Kirk Lawrence. 2010. "From chiefdoms to states: Toward an integrative theory of the evolution of polity." *Sociological Perspectives* 53:419-442.
- Brachet-Márquez, Viviane.** 2010. "Domination, contention and the negotiation of Inequality: A theoretical proposal." *Current Perspectives in Social Theory* 27.
- Chernilo, Daniel.** 2010. "On the relationships between social theory and natural law: Lessons from Karl Lowith and Leo Strauss." *History of the Human Sciences* 23:91-112.
- Cvajner, M. and **Giuseppe Sciortino.** 2010. "Theorizing irregular migration: The control of spatial mobility in differentiated societies." *European Journal of Social Theory* 13:389-404.
- DiCicco-Bloom, Benjamin and **David R. Gibson.** 2010. "More than a game: Sociological theory from the theories of games." *Sociological Theory* 28:247-271.
- Ermakoff, Ivan.** 2010. "Theory of practice, rational choice and historical change." *Theory and Society* 39:527-553.
- Goldstein, Warren S.** 2011. "The dialectics of religious conflict : Church, sect, denomination, and the culture wars." *Culture and Religion* 12:1-23.
- Koenig, Matthias** & Julian Dierkes 2011. "Conflict in the world-polity -neo-institutional perspectives". *Acta Sociologica* 54:5-25.
- Milner, Jr., Murray.** 2010. "Is celebrity a new kind of status system?" *Society* 47:379-387.
- Reed, Isaac Ariail.** 2010. "Epistemology contextualized: Social-scientific knowledge in a postpositivist era." *Sociological Theory* 28:20-39.
- Reed, Isaac Ariail** and Julia Adams. 2011. "Culture in the transitions to modernity: Seven pillars of a new research agenda." *Theory and Society* 40.
- Sanderson, Steve K., **Seth Abrutyn,** and Kristopher R. Proctor. 2011. "Testing the Protestant Ethic thesis with quantitative historical data: A research note." *Social Forces* 89:1-7.
- Sciortino, Giuseppe.** 2010. "A single societal community with full citizenship for all': Talcott Parsons, citizenship and modern society." *Journal of Classical Sociology* 10:239-259.

Other

- Charrad, Mounira.** (guest editor) 2010. "Women's Agency across Cultures: Conceptualizing Strengths and Boundaries." *Women's Studies International Forum* 33.
- Milner, Jr., Murray.** 2010. "Status Distinctions and Boundaries." in *Handbook of Cultural Sociology*, edited by John R. Hall, Laura Grindstaff, and Ming-Cheng Lo. Routledge.
- Milner, Jr., Murray.** In press. "Human Rights as Status Relations: A Sociological Approach to Understanding Human Rights." in *Handbook of Human Rights*, edited by Thomas Cushman. Routledge.
- Silbey, Susan.** (guest editor) 2011. "Special Issue: Sociological Citizens: Practicing Pragmatic Relational Regulation." *Regulation & Governance* 5:1-164.



Wearne, continued

Wenzel of the Freie Universität, Berlin. But now the original is published. It would also be of interest to scholars in the English-speaking world to learn how *Aktor, Situation und normative Muster* has been received among German sociologists in their interpretation of Parsons' theory from their side of the North Atlantic.

The Introduction by Lidz and Staubmann (5-29) provides an overview of the document, situating the essay in terms of the basic analytical problems with which Parsons was occupied. These problems occupied Parsons over his entire career, with his persistent effort to bring comprehensive solutions to light in his articles, monographs, conference presentations and collections of essays. Lidz and Staubmann also reckon with the highly complex characteristics of Parsons' theory of action, and they are convinced that this document may serve as a "highly accessible, even if somewhat partial" (29) introduction to Parsons' theory.

And so the essay is a first attempt to undertake the analytical task prefigured in *The Structure of Social Action*. Parsons begins by recognising the analogical similarity of the study of the actor and its situation with the organism in its environment.

Biological theory ... has developed a schema of thought which can, in certain aspects of its logical structure, serve as a point of departure for the present discussion [32].

Some years later, in his December 1949 Presidential Address "The Prospects of Sociological Theory" to the American Sociological Society (*American Sociological Review* XV, 1 February, 1950), Parsons explained his reservation about this "previous assumption", one he says he had shared with Weber and W I Thomas, that there was but *one* action equation.

... I think we have tended to follow the biological model of thought - an organism and its environment, an actor and his situations. We have not really treated culture as independent, or if that has been done, as by some anthropologists, the tendency has been for them in turn to absorb either personality or social structure into culture, especially the latter ... What we have done, which I wish to report is, I think, to take an important step toward drawing out for working theory the implications of the fundamental fact that man is a culture-bearing animal (Parsons 1950:8-9).

There is a complex issue here which cannot be resolved merely by reference to two brief quotes from the two documents written ten years apart. But the issue will have to be resolved in the subsequent discussion about the place of *Aktor, Situation and Normative Pattern* in the development of Talcott Parsons' mature theory of social action. Parsons' 1949 statement certainly involves a critical (re-)interpretation of his 1939 essay. Probing Parsons' "biological model of thought" in the earlier essay might well help to identify continuities and discontinuities his theoretical development. Though Lidz and Staubmann mention this later development in their sharp and lucid explanation of the essay, they do not go into Parsons' 1949 retrospective criticism of his earlier theoretical efforts at length. Parsons seems to have perceived *competing* tendencies in his previous formulations and consequently his longer-term multi-dimensional inclination to avoid unilinear evolutionary schemes was compromised. By utilizing "the biological model of thought" he had too easily used "organism and its environment" as paradigmatic for "actor and his situations".

Staubmann astutely notes in his Introduction to Volume 1 that Parsons understood action theory to be a matter of investigating the interdependence of systems "autonomous relative to each other" not "autonomous relative *from* each other" (Volume 1, p. 8). As it stands, the 1949 retrospective might help us understand why Parsons did not proceed with the publication of *Aktor, Situation and Normative Pattern*. But as Lidz and Staubmann have pointed out, it is now a useful guide to how Parsons *developed* his thinking prior to the "Major Exposition of the Author's Conceptual Scheme for the Analysis of the Dynamics of the Social System". This reviewer's intuition is that any discontinuity is illustrative of a basic and complex thread in Parsons' theoretical development whereby the concept of autonomy becomes oriented, more and more, to the idea of a system as a set of interdependent independent variables.

The *Studies in the Theory of Action* series recognizes the importance of gathering and disseminating key resources that will promote scientific reflection on the character and contribution of action theory. Lidz and Staubmann note that *Aktor, Situation and Normative Pattern* - whatever its deficiencies may be - is a highly accessible introduction to Talcott Parsons' action theory in his own words. It is now available for a new generation of students.

Shackleford, continued

Works Cited

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Quere, Louis, and Terzi, Cedric. (2011). Some Features of pragmatist Thought Still Remain Insufficiently Explored in Ethnomethodology. *Qualitative Sociology*, 34, 271-275.

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Winship, Christopher, and Muller, Christopher. (2011). Ethnomethodology and Consequences: Comment on Emirbayer and Maynard's "Pragmatism and Ethnomethodology". *Qualitative Sociology*, 34, 283-286.