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Can There Be A Global Society?

Amitai Etzioni, The George Washington University

Theory develops in many ways, including through quests for internal consistency, codification, and formalization. Another way it develops is in response to challenging questions posed by public leaders, policy makers, and the community at large, in which these people at least implicitly look to macrosociology for guidance (Coleman, Etzioni and Porter 1970; Lehman 1977) .

One such set of questions arises out of the recent increased interest in the development of a "global civil society." Many factors are said to have propelled such a development since 1990, such as the end of the Cold War, globalization, rapid communication technologies, the rise of English as a de facto lingua franca, thousands of new international nongovernmental organizations, a handful of transnational social movements, new supranational institutions (e.g., the proposed International Criminal Court and the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers), and an increase in the number and power of multinational corporations.

The same factors are said to diminish the capacities of national governments (especially all that are not superpowers) to manage their societal affairs, as well as to be behind

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What Has Happened to Scientific Sociology?

Jonathan H. Turner, University of California-Riverside

When I was in graduate school in the late 1960s, there was little debate about the prospects for scientific sociology. Most faculty and students were committed to the epistemology of science. Indeed, many students seemed concerned—in my view over-concerned—with the nature of scientific explanation. My fellow students had endless philosophical discussions about how to construct sociological explanations. Obviously, others were having the same conversation because by the mid 1970s, a host of "theory construction" texts had been produced. Most of these texts examined theoretical methods rather than substance, and as a result they were boring and not very useful, for a simple reason: Theories are insights into how the world operates; and just how they are stated is less important than the

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an increase in transnational problems, including organized crime, trafficking in human beings, and environmental challenges. Hence the interest in finding new (post-national) ways of dealing with the problems.

The challenge for sociological (and communitarian) theory, as I see it, starts with the question: Can there be a global society? Before this question can be addressed, it is necessary to specify what a society is. There is no agreed upon definition of society. Some argue that the very concept is a fiction (Bentham 1935), that all there is are individuals and the transactions and contracts they make. Others hold that societies are arenas in which classes clash, and that the very term seeks to falsely impose unity where none exists nor should exist. Still others maintain that society is a fruitful concept but view it as reflecting a pattern of distribution of powers (among elites and followers) and assets. Finally, there are those who add the sharing of a consensus on core values (this presumes that a stable society must be ensconced in a state).

I tried to show elsewhere, on the basis of four case studies, that for a society to be sustainable, three conditions must be met: it must have control of the means of violence that exceeds that of subunits; it must have a significant capacity to reallocate economic goods; and it must command loyalty in key, relevant matters that trumps commitment to subgroups or external ones (Etzioni 2001). I tried to show that only if these conditions are met is a

society in the long run able to countervail centrifugal forces that exist in all social groupings, especially large and complex ones.

I will use the definition just outlined for the rest of the discussion, although, of course, the matter of what is the appropriate definition of society stands and the answer one's theory provides will affect all the deliberations that follow and many others.

Using, then, the three conditions as the criteria, whether or not a global society is beginning to develop (obviously it is not in place) is a matter for empirical study.

However, a corollary theoretical question remains: must societies in general, and a global one in particular, be ensconced in a state? The idea that the state may wither away is an old one, but has been put by Marx at the "end of history," and is considered by many as utopian—that is, sociologically untenable. However, the idea has received new currency recently with the rise of new technological developments. They have made possible the theoretical conception of a society (and within it, communities and organizations, corporations included) in which networks (of equals) replace hierarchies; information—power; and self-regulation—government through the state (Meyer, Boli, Thomas, and Ramirez 1997). This conception has been held to apply particularly to cyberspace (Barlow 1996), in which a growing proportion of social transactions is projected to take place.

More moderate and widely held theories,

sometimes referred to as "governance without government," (See, for instance, Rosenau and Czempiel 1992; Young 1999; Mathews 1997; Václav Havel 1999) do not conceptualize a global society without government, but (a) view the global society as relying to a significant extent on transnational nonstate actors (e.g., many thousands of NGOs and social movements) to regulate itself, and (b) project that although national states and intergovernmental international organizations will play a role, a considerable part of their current role will be absorbed by smaller societal entities. Václav Havel (1999) writes, "the state...can go in only two directions: downward or upward. Downward applies to the various organs and structures of civil society to which the state should gradually transfer many of the tasks it now performs itself. Upward applies to various regional, transnational or global communities or organizations." These theories also (c) point to the rise of global norms, some shared values, and world public opinion not only as societal factors but also as leading to new global laws that are enforced by national governments and to some extent by new or developing international courts. But all agree that a global state (or world government) is neither possible nor desired. For instance, Lawrence Lessig (1999) states without hesitation that world government is an "impossibility."

The challenge for sociological theory is whether one can conceptualize a stable society not ensconced in a state. Historically, much has been made of the role of (domestic) civil society in protecting citizens from excessive intrusion by the state, and ensuring that the state will not weaken communities, voluntary associations and families by preempting their functions. In short, civil society has been viewed largely as a counterweight to a potentially overpowering state.

Less has been made in recent work (unlike the work of earlier social philosophers) of the benefits that civil society derives

Perspectives is the newsletter of the Theory Section of the American Sociological Association. It is published quarterly in January, April, July, and October. The deadline for all submissions is the fifth day of the month before publication. We welcome news and commentary as well as announcements about conferences, journal information, calls for papers, position openings, and any other information of interest to section members.

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Looking in the Middle: Between the Micro and the Macro Levels of the Social Worlds

D. Paul Johnson, Texas Tech University

A great deal of emphasis in sociological theory in recent years has involved efforts to integrate different levels of analysis, particularly the micro level of face-to-face relations and the macro level of the overall society. In some ways the difference parallels the distinction between agency and structure, although the two dichotomies are conceptually distinct. Even so, the concept of agency seems to focus on micro-level social worlds. Similarly, analyses that focus on structure tend to move beyond local situations toward the larger social world, including the overall society – or even beyond in a global perspective. Despite differences in starting points and primary focus, much important theoretical work is relevant to both levels (and in between), as well as to the analysis of “duality” in which both agency and structure are involved with neither assumed to be primary in an ontological sense. But social formations between the micro and macro levels sometimes seem neglected.

The modest proposal I offer is that we need to devote more explicit attention to intermediate-level social formations located between face-to-face social relations and the overall society. This should help enhance the appeal of sociology and sociological theory to our students. The undergraduates we encounter typically are not tuned into the sophisticated and specialized discourse reflected in our efforts to link micro and macro levels or agency and structure. In fact, the impression our students are likely to get is that sociological theory consists mostly of texts in which different scholars criticize, elaborate, fine-tune, or synthesize one another’s text-based ideas and paradigms. Students readily pick up on the micro/macro distinction (and in my experience most seem to prefer the micro-level focus) – but beyond this the relation between theorists’ texts and the real world they encounter seems rather elusive to many of them. Even so, students today are sufficiently aware of the complexity of the social world that they should be able to relate to the distinctions among the different types of real-life social formations they encounter in every-day life.

Although other specific meso-level social formations could no doubt be proposed as equally important, I suggest the following as making good sense for linking micro and macro levels: markets, socioeconomic classes, organizations, communities. Why these four? For one thing, these social formations transcend face-to-face relations, such as primary groups and social networks. Although network structures extend beyond personal relationships, they consist fundamentally of the various social ties individuals have with one another as individuals, either direct or indirect. Network structures can be compared and contrasted, of course, as well as the various positions within them. But networks boil down essentially to individual-level social contacts and relations, which of course can vary along many different dimensions. (In his theory text published over a decade ago, Randall Collins (1988) included chapters on both networks and organizations.)

Markets, socioeconomic classes, organizations, and communities can be related in varying ways to most commonly cited theoretical perspectives. If we start with the currently popular rational choice theory, for example, its utilitarian and individualistic

Graduate Student Paper Award Competition

The ASA Section on the History of Sociology invites you (or your students) to submit a scholarly paper for its Graduate Student Paper Award. The deadline for receipt of the paper is February 15, 2002.

Students who will be enrolled (full or part-time) in a graduate sociology program as of February 15, 2002, may submit one scholarly paper for consideration. The submission may be a sociology seminar or term paper, an article submitted or accepted for publication in a sociology journal, or a single chapter from a sociology thesis or sociology dissertation. The submission must focus on a theoretical issue or empirical problem central to the History of Sociology.

Eligible students should send three copies of a cover letter and three copies of their paper to the Committee Chair: Connie D. Frey, Department of Sociology, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE 68588-0324. Additional Committee members include Ruth Chananie, Department of Sociology, Middle Tennessee State University; and Kevin D. Vryan, Department of Sociology, University of Indiana-Bloomington. All members of the selection committee are themselves graduate students and are not eligible for the award.

It is not necessary to be a member of the History of Sociology Section to submit a paper for this award. If you have any questions, please contact Connie Frey at 402-472-6038 or cfrey@unlserve.unl.edu.

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 substantive insight. True, formal theories can be more readily tested, but I would rather have a loosely-stated theory that says something important than one that is elegantly packaged but not about a generic social process. The problem with the theory construction movement of the 1970s is that it had a mechanical view of how to build theory, converting what is a creative process into something akin to the theoretical equivalent of the SSPS manual. Moreover, the theory construction movement implicitly privileged quantitative research, whereas a good many of the really important theoretical insights into generic processes in sociology have come from qualitative research. Thus, an unhealthy divide was created: scientific theory and quantitative research, on the one side, and non- (or anti-) scientific theory and qualitative research on the other. Not everyone, of course, adheres to this divide but it persists nonetheless, and it is very destructive to creative scientific theorizing.

Over the last thirty years, however, even more profound divisions have emerged in sociology. One trend has been hyper-differentiation of the field in general, and theory in particular. Theoretical programs are increasingly about particular processes; and while such focus is useful, theoretical sociology has lost in grand theories. Grand theorists, such as Talcott Parsons, have died

Social Action Systems: Foundation and Synthesis in Sociological Theory

By Thomas J. Fararo
 Praeger Publishers, September 2001

The book employs a relational process mode of thought to interpret and assess the content and logic of general theory in sociology from the standpoint the author calls "the spirit of unification." A description and table of contents appears at the publisher's web site at the URL:

<http://info.greenwood.com/books/0275973/027597362x.html>

and have not been reproduced; and as a result, there are very few integrative theories in the discipline today. Some claim to be integrative but these are typically chauvinistic claims about the priority of some process, such as rational choice or symbolic interaction. The cumulation of knowledge requires pulling together diverse theoretical approaches; otherwise, theorists like their researcher counterparts simply go their own way and talk only to each other.

A second trend has been the revival of the anti-science movement, in a number of guises. One is critical theory which simply argues that sociological theory should be normative, critiquing what is oppressive and articulating more liberating alternatives. While I agree with the ideological intent of such theorizing, I find most of it impotent. The liberating alternatives are generally utopian, and while they may make theorists feel good about themselves, they rarely would do much good for people in the real world. For, once theory is driven by ideology instead of test-hardened science, the ideology more than reality drives proclamations. Another strand of anti-science is post-modernism which, like critical theory, is driven by an anti-science epistemology. As a result, we have many pronouncements on the postmodern condition without any real tests to see if these are empirically true. To even suggest that these pronouncements be tested invites derision of imposing the criteria of a failed epistemology. As a result, postmodernists take us into a never-never land of pronouncements that may or may not be true, but we are not permitted to find out since that would be privileging texts that test theories.

A third trend that has infected both research and theorizing is political correctness. Today, some topics cannot be addressed without stigma (e.g., the effects of biological processes on gender); and others must be addressed with certain clear ideological sympathies (for all who are defined as oppressed). Political cor-

rectness makes it difficult to explore all of the domains of reality that are part of sociology; and they impose a reign of terror for anyone who does not think in "the right way." While I may share most of the ideological commitments of those who have imposed this reign of terror, I cannot think of anything more pernicious than letting ideological commitments determine what one can study and what one can say. Moreover, along with PC has come a distortion in what sociologists study. While race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality are very important social forces about which we should theorize, they are not the only processes operating in the social world. But today we seem to be somewhat obsessed with these topics. A certain amount of correction is necessary in light of how gender and sexuality were ignored for a good part of sociology's history, but surely, we can study other forces as well.

A fourth trend is the continued worship of the masters. Sociologists still stand in their founders' shadows rather than on their shoulders. Like any religious sect, many read and re-read the sacred texts and engage the appropriate rituals. Many have become disciples of St. Marx, St. Weber, St. Durkheim, and St. Mead; and while it is important to have knowledge of the history of one's discipline, the fact that history of ideas constitutes a good part of what is call sociological theory and that this activity is conducted with such reverence is not healthy for a science. Continual re-reading of the masters does not increase the reach of our theories; rather, it confines theoretical inquiry to categories and ideas of the past, some of which will be part of our theories today but many of which should be left behind. What we do in sociology is like physics teaching the life and times of Newton in a theory course, or of biologists re-reading over and over again Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* as their theory text. Surely, like physics and biology, we should take what is useful and move on; we should extract the key insights and build on them, leaving

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emphasis is most clearly manifested in market transactions. This includes markets for material goods as well as for non-material (symbolic or emotional) rewards as well. Once personal relationships are developed, however, pure market dynamics give way to the micro-level dynamics of personal relationships. Specifically, individuals' self-interests may be modified to varying degrees by identification with the needs and interests of others. While rational choice theorists would emphasize the ongoing assessment of benefits of various kinds that individuals receive from all their social relations, the formation of socioemotional bonds may lead individuals to be sufficiently attuned to others that they transcend their own self-interests somewhat and experience the pleasures and pains of others as their own. Of course, people may move in and out of the market for various social and emotional rewards, as illustrated, for example, by the experience of divorce and remarriage.

Socioeconomic classes may be seen as emerging from market transactions in which there is inequality in resources that individuals bring to their exchange transactions. In the case of social relationships, we know from the long-established perspective of exchange theory that imbalance resulting from differences in resources gives rise to differentiation of status and power (Blau 1964). This would apply whether the resources are material, cultural, social, or emotional. In markets for material goods and economic resources, the tendency for inequality to increase through market dynamics is perhaps most obvious (see Frank and Cook (1995) for a popular treatment of this dynamic). These dynamics are suggested by Marx's notion of the narrow "cash nexus" linking capitalist employers and workers in the labor market in the absence of community or other types of social bonds. Without the moderating effects of community ties, some form of collective action through social organization appears to be necessary to counteract

Social Theory Conference 2002

The International Social Theory Consortium is a association of programmes and individual scholars with interests in Social Theory across the social sciences and humanities. The group includes many of the 50 programmes worldwide devoted to teaching and research in social theory, but welcomes everyone with an interest in social, political, and cultural theory. Its third annual meeting will take place at the Inter-University Centre in Dubrovnik, Croatia, on 1-4 July 2002. The meeting will be sponsored by the Centre for Social and Political Thought at the University of Warwick, UK. Paper and session topics on all areas relating to social theory are invited. We especially welcome proposals that capitalize on the Central-Eastern European setting of the conference. All submissions must include at least a 200-word abstract and relevant contact points, including e-mail addresses. Full papers are desirable but not necessary. There will be a conference fee of 75 US dollars, which includes consortium membership. The fee may be waived under exceptional circumstances. There may also be travel funds for needy scholars. The deadline for papers and proposals is 1 February 2002. We expect to issue registration forms shortly after that date. For more information about the Social Theory Consortium, see <http://www.socialtheory.org>. For more information about the Inter-University Centre, see <http://www.hr/iuc>. Send submissions (preferably by e-mail) to Ms Frances Jones, Research Secretary, Dept of Sociology, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL, UK. E-mail: sysdb@csv.warwick.ac.uk. Fax: +44 2476-523-497. Please clearly state 'Social Theory Consortium' in your subject header.

the growing inequality of pure market systems. Conflict and critical theory perspectives clearly are relevant for analyzing socioeconomic classes and their mobilization.

The rational choice perspective can also be applied to the formation of formal organizations (though other perspectives may also be used as well). The relevance of rational choice theory reflects the fact that organizations are deliberately established to accomplish goals, either individual or collective, that individuals cannot accomplish (or accomplish as effectively) on their own. However, because they are established for collective action, their dynamics differ from markets. Organizational hierarchies of power and authority are deliberately established, as opposed to emerging from individualistic market transactions (though as "corporate actors" they too are involved in market transactions) (this notion of "corporate actors" is from Coleman's (1990) systematic rational choice perspective). Recruitment of their personnel (as

employees or members) may begin with market-type transactions, but once individuals are recruited they are thereby "out of the market," at least for the time being. Moreover, personal relationships and network ties of various kinds are developed in organizational settings. Organizations are also sites with the potential for the emergence of a sense of community, either within the organization as a whole or among certain segments (perhaps those at the same hierarchical level).

Although organizations can be analyzed in terms of the individualistic interests of those involved, they may also be seen as social "systems" (especially since they were designed that way). Thus their internal processes and external relations may be analyzed according to the basic logic of functionalism in terms of whether or how they contribute to the maintenance or growth of the system, or whether they undermine it. In addition, organizations are arenas within which various individual and group conflicts

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from the state. This is true, in part, because it is obvious that society benefits from the state, for instance by curbing intergroup and interpersonal violence. It also reflects the fact that there are relatively few empirical studies that examine the relationship between a community's ability to rely on its norms and informal controls, and the availability of laws and public authorities to back up these communal norms and controls. In addition, historically (especially in view of past totalitarianism and authoritarianism) more attention has been paid to protecting society from the state than to the state's nurturing of civil society.

If one grants that some kind of global state will be needed if the global society is to stabilize, the following questions arise: Will it have to be an encompassing one, akin to national states, or could it be limited, for instance, to security and to narrow economic matters such as trade, but not deal with reallocation of wealth and welfare? Could such a narrow global government be legitimated? And could such a government be legitimated without being subject to some kind of a world parliament? These theoretical issues are now, in effect, put to the test on a small scale in the European Union, which so far has formed largely an economic bloc. The question arises whether or not it must move toward a full-fledged state (often referred to as a united states of Europe, a federation) to be sustainable. If the response is in the affirmative, to what extent could member nations and entities within them maintain a measure of autonomy (an issue flagged as a question of "subsidiarity") from the Union government? I do not presume that whatever we learn from the EU experience will necessarily apply to other regions, let alone the world, but it serves to highlight the challenging issues sociological theory might help to illuminate (Etzioni 1968).

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Second International Social Theory Consortium Conference, University of Sussex, UK, July 2001: A Participant's Report

Austin Harrington, University of Leeds, UK

The conference at Sussex was a most enjoyable and illuminating experience. I think it was the best social science conference I have so far attended. For the first time I felt I was speaking to an audience and listening to papers by people who all knew exactly what we were talking about, rather than, as so often for social theorists, trying to fit in on the edge of some wider, or rather more likely narrower, agenda. I'm sure many of us had very similar feelings and really appreciated the chance to exchange ideas in a setting unconstrained by the traditional exclusionary disciplinary boundaries. I felt the conference achieved exactly what the Consortium has set out to do, namely to overcome the awful feeling of marginality many of us experience as isolated figures working in departments dominated by policy-led empirical research. All the papers and discussions were of an excellent standard, at once pluralistic in approach and focused. We heard papers ranging from debates over multiple modernities and globalization and the state to realism and the future of 'society', ethics, values and technology, feminist readings of classical sociology, social space and resistance, eroticism, the media, post-colonial politics and many other interlocking themes. The extraordinary sense at the end was that all these diverse analyses did indeed come together in a single disciplinary vision that felt empowered to articulate a definite agenda for future social-scientific thinking and to demand the institutional attention it deserves. I've no doubt that the Consortium will rapidly go on to expand in numbers and broaden its reach of participation, both in terms of academic and student involvement and critical perspectives.

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 the rest of the classics to historians of the discipline. Our founders should be footnotes, and their ideas so incorporated into our explanatory principles that the life and times of these founders are irrelevant in theory circles.

A fifth trend is the continued teaching of introductory sociology in the same old way. Our introductory texts look much the same, not so much because we have consensus over what is important but because each book tries to copy the market leader. The books have changed very little from Kingsley Davis' 1948 text where the modern format first appeared. Sure, we have added materials; for political correctness, we have added some new theoretical founders; and in light of the concern with previously neglected topics, such as gender, we have appropriately added materials. But the books are not driven by theory. They are not organized around generic properties and processes of the social universe, but rather, they are appeals to market forces. Color, cartoons, boxes, and all kinds of materials to make sociology interesting are now part of any text; what is missing is any effort to organize materials in light of theoretical principles. True, there is almost always a discussion of theoretical perspectives—conflict, functionalism, exchange, interactionism, and the like—but these are phrased so generally as to be vacuous. We now have many interesting theories in sociology that develop explicit explanatory principles, but one would be hard pressed to find them in an introductory text. Indeed, it is difficult to find them in most theory texts.

A sixth trend is the perpetuation of certain long-standing debates. One is, of course, the prospect for scientific sociology. But other debates occupy too much of our time. For example, agency versus structure and micro vs. macro issues consume a considerable amount of intellectual energy. Agency vs. structure is often conflated with science vs. anti-science debate, and the micro-macro issue more often tries to privilege the micro over the macro in

ways that arrest theorizing at all levels of reality. I find these debates rather sterile and not productive because they are couched at such a general, philosophical level. It would be much more healthy to see theorists developing models and principles about agency and structure as well as micro, meso, and macro processes; and then, we would have something to work with as we sort through the larger meta-theoretical issues. The word, meta, means to come after, and yet much meta-theory in sociology comes before we have any theory to meta-theorize about.

These, then, are some unhealthy trends in theoretical sociology that present roadblocks to scientific sociology. These roadblocks are not likely to go away, and this is, for me at least, a depressing fact of intellectual life in sociology. Yet, I can still dream that sociology will come to its senses and begin to re-orient itself in several new directions. First, we should recognize that the social world unfolds at different levels: the micro, meso, and macro. These are analytical distinctions, to be sure, but they actually reflect the way the social world is constructed. Second, we should try to discover the generic forces that drive the formation of social and cultural structures at each level of reality. Third, we should then develop models and principles that explain their operative dynamics. And, fourth, these models and principles should be tested with the most appropriate methodology (more often than not qualitative). In my dream world, introductory sociology texts would be organized around these

principles, using illustrations and exercises to make them understandable to students. Gone would be boxes, cartoons, and empty reviews of theoretical perspectives. If my dream were pursued, sociology would be a much smaller discipline, but it would be a natural science that would enjoy more respect and, I might add, have more relevance to resolving social problems facing the world today. A theoretically mature sociology is, I believe, the best prospect for achieving the ends of critical theory. Sadly, my vision is as utopian as any critical theorists, and perhaps as out of sync with empirical reality as the pronouncements of some postmodernists. Still, I have hope that some of the trends in sociology and theorizing can be arrested, if not reversed. Whatever the many flaws of theorizing in the 1950s and 1960s, there was at least the sense that sociology could do something important and that it could take its place at the table of science. Today, there seems to be a smug cynicism about sociology's prospects, coupled with a determination to make it a watered down humanities drowning in its own discourse.

Oops!

We made a mistake last issue. Please note that the correct email address for James J. Chriss, Cleveland State University, is:

j.chriss@csuohio.edu

Our apologies, The Editors

Call for Papers

Sociological Practice: A Journal of Clinical and Applied Sociology. This is a call for papers for a special issue, "Impact of Contemporary Theory on Sociological Practice." The issue will focus on contemporary theorists who have or should have significant impact on sociological practice assessing their influence or potential influence on, for example, practitioner goals, values, client selection, intervention strategies, theoretical orientations, methodologies, ethics, organization or the status of sociology as a discipline. Deadline March 1, 2002. Submit papers to Bob Dotzler, SP Guest Editor, 1216 Lago Road, Chesapeake, VA 23322-7147 USA. See "Instructions for Contributors" on the Sociological Practice Association website: <http://www.socpractice.org>. For additional information, contact the guest editor at dotzler@erols.com.

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occur, both within and especially between different hierarchical levels. In fact, consistent with the basic orientation of critical theory, probably most formal organizations could be critically evaluated with an eye to increasing opportunities for empowerment of their members, providing greater equality, and expanding opportunities for human fulfillment.

The contrast between organizations and communities can be traced back to Tönnies' well-known distinction between *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft*. Communities may be analyzed as based on socioemotional bonds, real or imagined. In contrast to the way organizations reflect rational choices oriented toward individual or collective goals, communities emerge from people's sense of having emotional bonds with "fellow members" because of perceived similarities. These similarities may involve shared values or interests, common experiences, or overlapping "memories" grounded in traditions that differentiate them from outsiders. Because the sense of belonging is based on people's feelings, the community is a type of social formation for which the sociology of emotions is particularly apt (e.g., Scheff 1997).

Communities may be based on residential location (as in everyday life notions of community), organizational involvement, or on abstract categories (such as the academic community, for example, or the business or art community). Although community identification is likely to be strengthened by actual social relationships with fellow-members, the abstract sense of community transcends personal relationships. Even when people don't know their neighbors, for example, they still may identify with their residential community. Political leaders often seek to invoke a sense of community as a rhetorical device to promote cohesion and enlist political support. Critical analyses of our society that appeal for a renewed sense of community, either locally or nationally, to counteract the high level of individualism in our society reflect the notion of "com-

Shils-Coleman Memorial Award Competition

The ASA's Theory Section invites submissions for the Shils-Coleman Memorial Award. This is an annual prize for the best submitted social theory paper by a current graduate student. The award consists of \$500 in travel money for attending the annual meeting of the ASA. Eligible papers include a paper that has been published or accepted for publication, a paper presented or accepted for presentation at a professional meeting, or a paper suitable for publication or presentation. The deadline for submissions is April 1, 2002. The recipient will be contacted by June 1, 2002, and a public presentation of the award will be made at the 2002 ASA annual meeting in August. Electronic submission as an attached file in a standard word-processing format is strongly encouraged. Please submit your paper to: mikebell@iastate.edu. However, paper submission is also acceptable. Please mail to: Michael Bell, Chair, Graduate Student Paper Committee, Department of Sociology, 107 East Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, IA, USA, 50011. Note that the recipient of the award will be asked to provide evidence of graduate student status at the time of submission.

munity as ideal" (e.g., Putnam 2000). Whether or not a community is capable of collective action depends on whether or not it is organized. Neighborhood residents, for example, may not necessarily have actual relationships with one another or be organized for collective action – even though they may idealize the concept of neighborliness and contrast their image of cohesive communities of the past with their present lack of neighborliness. The degree to which a community is stratified in terms of socioeconomic or other criteria varies greatly in different communities. In general, we would expect socioemotional bonds to be stronger among people who are roughly equal in status.

The competing theories that make up our field can be compared and contrasted in terms of how they apply to the differences in the dynamics of markets, socioeconomic classes, organizations, and communities. These intermediate level social formations, described all too briefly above, are ones that our students surely experience in everyday life – and to which they can relate more easily than to the type of discourse reflected in most theory texts. More importantly, our various theories, including the social exchange and rational choice perspectives, functionalism, conflict theory, critical theory, and the sociology of emotions can readily be re-

lated in various ways to these various meso-level social formations.

Despite its micro-level emphasis the symbolic interactionist perspective can be seen as a foundation for all these social formations because of its emphasis on the fundamental importance of communication and the way the self-concept is involved in all aspects of social life. Students should have no trouble appreciating the centrality of their own self-concepts in their own social world and how their identities are shaped or expressed in the context of these four meso-level social formations.

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