Message from the Chair

Global Differences in Conceptualizing Culture

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Why should US sociologists learn to speak or read other languages, when English is the world language? Aren't the sociologies of non-English language communities transposed seamlessly into English? How does the path from French (post-)structuralism lead forward to American-style pragmatism? And if it does, why is it so difficult for US and French sociologists to collaborate in studying "culture"? Why do Brazilians read Gramsci differently than Europeans tend to? Why in Japan do sociologists have less purchase on the study of culture than scholars from other disciplines and from outside the academy altogether? More generally, how do scholarly conceptions of culture differ, intersect, and travel (or not) across national and regional borders?

These questions and others arise from an invited session at last year's ASA meetings on "Global Differences in Conceptualizing Culture" that I co-organized with Paul Lichterman and Ann Mische. The session was co-sponsored by the Culture and Theory sections, with modest financial support from a "Fund for the Advancement of the Discipline" grant from the National Science Foundation and the ASA. We were honored by the participation of Daniel Cefai; Evelina Dagnino; Thomas Eberle; and Eiko Ikegami. Paul Lichterman introduced the session, and Michele Lamont served as discussant. The papers from this session will also appear in the inaugural issue of the newsletter of the Research Network on Culture of the European Sociological Association, and possibly in other venues. (There is only space, in the print edition of Culture, for extracts of these papers. Full versions of the papers are readily available on the Section's website: http://www.ibiblio.org/culture/)

The global differences that the session was intended to explore were never imagined to be "essentialistic" ones, although in decades past they might have been imagined that way. Up until the period of the world wars, it was (as Don Levine [1995] has demonstrated) fruitful to conceive national sociological traditions in essentialistic terms, since those traditions developed in relative isolation from each other, within distinguishing frameworks of characteristically different sets of basic methodological,

Feature Article

Creating an Inclusive Venue for Sociological Studies of Language

Celine-Marie Pascale, John Mohr, and Corinne Kirchner

Language, broadly construed as systems of representation, is arguably the foundation of shared culture—it is the premier symbolic system. While language is central to social interaction and social structures, it remains at the margins of sociological research and theory. Given the profoundly interpretive nature of language, studies of language often have been regarded as being more humanistic than scientific. Within Sociology, studies of language have tended to focus on highly technical aspects of conversation analysis, perhaps reflecting an effort to reconcile the importance of language and the demands of science. However, with changing and contested notions of what constitutes a social science and deeper appreciation for the inseparability of symbolic practices and material realities, more sociologists are turning to a broad range of theories and methods for apprehending the sociological importance of language.

Moving away from the highly technical focus associated with conversation analysis, sociologists are increasingly concerned about the ability of studies of language to effectively apprehend routine relations of power and privilege—to get at the reproduction of power in the dailiness of ordinary life. For example, a superficial review of literature might include Steinberg's (1999) analysis of how material and discursive forces conjoin in shaping inequalities; Williams' (1999) exploration of the relevance of French Discourse Analysis for a language-based empirical research; Bourdieu's (2003) argument for the potency of symbolic power in strengthening relations of oppression and exploitation; Osha's (2005) argument for the usefulness of poststructural discourse analysis for African scholars seeking to develop Afrocentric scholarship; and

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ontological, and normative postulates (e.g., methodological individualism v. methodological collectivism). Theoretical variations among the different traditions were far greater than the theoretical variations within them, due to general consensus within each tradition about such basic postulates. No longer, however, is that the case. Indeed as these papers indicate, national traditions are fundamentally divided against themselves (in ways that vary from tradition to tradition).

The authors' readings of their national traditions reflect their personal research projects and passions: Eiko, reflecting on her own "commuting identity"as a Japanese-raised US scholar studying Japan; Evelina, a political scientist-activist studying the struggles and contradictions of Brazilian social movements; Daniel, collaborating with Paul Lichterman and others across idiomatic differences in a comparative study of agencies for the homeless in Paris and elsewhere; Thomas, reviving and complementing our understanding of lifeworlds with a new emphasis on pragmatics.

Comparing their four papers indicates the ways that global historical and institutional processes help shape conceptions of culture. In both Japan and Brazil, the study of culture falls more within the purview of cultural studies than sociology, partly in opposition to US and western hegemony. In Japan, the postwar transformation of academic institutions--at once following and resisting the US model--created culture-studying "publics" (spheres of communicative action as sites of cultural production and identity-formation) in interdisciplinary fields and outside the academy. There is thus no Japanese equivalent to the ASA's Culture Section. In Brazil, the theory of culture developed in conjunction with the emergence of social movements combating poverty, exclusion, and authoritarian regimes. In this context, culture was conceptualized as "a simultaneous production of meanings and power relations," in Evelina's terms, informed above all by a revision of reductionist marxist readings of Gramsci, so that not only is culture inflected by power, but power is constituted by culture. This focus on culture's generative tensions and possibilities dislodges statist assumptions and broadens the very conceptions of politics and democracy.

The reports from Switzerland and France suggest a less ambivalent embrace of US sociology, which after all is largely sprung from European roots. Daniel Cefai and his colleagues are rediscovering and revitalizing symbolic interactionism and other approaches to the study of meaning-making. Daniel's paper can be read as a revisionist version of Homo Academicus; while US sociologists are still striving to decipher the oracular pronouncements about symbol systems of French structuralism and post-structuralism, many French

sociologists are refining "pragmatist sociology," by studying inter-objectivity as well as inter-subjectivity; identifying the conventions that enable joint action; and specifying the grounds of justification. The French, in Daniel's account, have come up against some of the same puzzling impasses as have such US sociologists as Eliasoph and Licherman: "How do we grasp 'cultural patterns' beyond the contextual description of meaning-making activities?...What is the connection between symbols and action?" But as Paul Lichterman noted (in a comment at the 2007 ASA meetings that provided one impetus for this 2008 session), the French do not use the term "culture" the way that US sociologists do. Thus Daniel has to tease out the points of articulation between the two sociologies.

Thomas emphasizes the limitations of such translations. Language, after all, is the foundation of the lifeworld. German sociology has traditionally opposed "culture" to "civilization"—but what Germans denote by "culture" is closer to the English word "civilization." Having been acculturated to the multi-lingual society of Switzerland, Thomas argues that "you cannot really understand another culture if you do not understand its language!" German sociology places greater emphasis on phenomenology than US sociology; German sociologists are revisiting the legacy of Alfred Schutz (as it happens, a refugee from Austria-Germany to the US in 1938, which is especially relevant to this session because his corpus includes works in both German and English). The complete (and critically re-edited) version, in process, of Schutz's works reveals (among other promising openings) a previously overlooked pragmatic orientation to that work that has dramatic significance for the sociology of culture.

An obvious important benefit to US cultural sociologists of bringing together diverse global perspectives , as Michele Lamont noted in her closing comments at the ASA session, is to alert us to distinctive properties of our own practice that we would otherwise take for granted. She noted in particular the pressure applied by funders and evaluators towards systematic research designs and scientistic rhetoric. Eiko complements that observation by pointing out how the "competitive professionalization" of US academics differs from the traditional Japanese models of scholars as sources of wisdom or as public intellectuals. As a result of US academic hegemony, however, she expects the US model to become more influential. Michele noted that the Bologna process (aimed at creating a European Higher Education Area) similarly brought to Europe such US-style concerns as peer-review, H-scores, and the impact index of publication outlets.

Another benefit of surveying diverse global perspectives is to deepen the heuristics of

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cultural inquiry. The four papers printed here incorporate a range of methods—reflexive, dialectical, and agonistic. Their versions of culture also encompass the different "modes of language" that Andy Abbott (2004) borrows from Charles Morris: semantic (we might say, meaning-making), pragmatic (action-oriented), and syntagmatic (relating parts within a larger structure). Indeed, the very absence of satisfactory translations for "culture" within and among the varied traditions generates elaboration of the primitive set of heuristic possibilities. Daniel and Thomas, for example, are both working to join semantic and pragmatic conceptions of culture. Evelina's attempt to join the pragmatic and semantic extends over into syntagmatics—leading to a recasting of relations among culture, politics, and economics. Eiko and Thomas even provide specific "methods of discovery" for amplifying conceptions of culture. Eiko provides a meso-level "trick of the trade": investigate the field that embeds the networked "public" within which cultures emerge. Thomas, ever the sociologist erudite about language, enjoins us to focus on untranslatables, and suggests a strategy for doing so: analyze semantic fields both synchronically and diachronically, as well as both semasiologically and onomasiologically (that is, exploring all meanings of a given term as well as all designations of a given object). By becoming more cosmopolitan—and multi-lingual—we can amplify the conception of culture as we learn to inquire in new ways about relations of lifeworlds, interaction patterns, meaning, power, institutions, publics, and history.

Cultural Sociology in Japan and the U.S: Hidden Historical and Institutional Contexts
Eiko Ikegami, New School for Social Research, USA

The influence of American sociology in the postwar universities was not simply the result of Japanese scholars' intellectual choice and admiration. It was a hegemonic encounter with the dynamics of global politics. Eliminating the elitism of Japanese higher education with the limited number of elitist imperial universities, which had been a mechanism for reproducing the prewar establishment, was a major item on the political agenda for democratizing Japan. Numerous new public and private universities and colleges emerged in this context to popularize higher education for both men and women. This institutional development worked for the benefit of post-war Japanese sociology. The curricula in the newly institutionalized American-style universities and colleges adapted sociology for undergraduate general learning courses; this development in turn resulted in a significant expansion of academic positions in

sociology. Sociology as an academic discipline in Japan was finally institutionalized in this process. The hegemonic position of the United States in postwar Japan influenced the process of intellectual transformation both directly and indirectly.

...Sociological studies of "culture" had a complicated relationship with this postwar transformation of Japanese academic institutions. With the redirection of postwar Japanese sociology as an empirical social science, the notion of culture came to be understood more as a collection of concrete practices on the level of everyday life, or as tangible codes shared by collectivities. Talcott Parsons became influential in postwar Japan in this regard...On the other hand, as American empirical approaches formed the core of postwar Japanese sociology, studies of culture began to emphasize more politically critical approaches to the ongoing transformation and modernization of Japanese society. It was in this situation that scholars working on the sociological studies of culture, broadly speaking, flourished on the margins or outside the formal discipline of sociology.

...Postwar Japan had an abundance of spheres of intellectual discourse for cultural studies of everyday life that flourished primarily outside the university-centered academic world. These scholars' rejection of disciplinary academic approaches and their strong skepticism regarding the application of imported theories to Japanese life was an important feature of the public discourse of postwar Japan; it served to promote the subsequent development of studying cultural practices in Japan...Contemporary cultural sociology in Japan has built on this historical development; its most influential sites of public discourse are not located within the academic discipline.

A corollary to this situation is that Japanese sociology as a disciplinary community does not offer very cohesive and influential sites of public discourse for Japanese cultural sociologists. Japanese sociology lacks an equivalent to the section of cultural sociology at the ASA.

Conceptualizing Culture: A Perspective from the South
Evelina Dagnino, University of Campinas, Brazil

As a simultaneous production of meanings and power relations, culture finds its mirror in politics, in which the production and confrontation of power relations always implies cultural meanings.

The main challenge faced by this conceptual emphasis is, in asserting relational and non reductive ways of conceiving culture and politics, the indispensable need for clarifying specificities and different modes of

Conference in honor of Professor Ruth Katz, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, December 2008. "What We Learn from the Humanities"

Jeffrey C. Alexander, Yale University

One of the distinctive achievements of Ruth Katz is how she has worked both sides of the street dividing the humanities and the social sciences. That she has been as much social scientist as humanist has been perhaps her most public identity in the field of musicology, and we see disciplines outside those of the traditional humanities well represented in the conference this week. As a cultural sociologist, however, I have been more interested in how she keeps her humanities jacket on when she dons the hat of the social scientist.

When this humanist does "commit a social science" – as the poet W. H. Auden warned Harvard students not to – she does so by bringing the disciplines of the humanities, not by dismissing them for the chimera of hard structures, scientific methods, and objective cause. She has moved from humanities to social science, in other words, in distinctively anti-positivist, interpretive, meaning-oriented way. Twenty-five years ago, Ruth Katz laid this program out in a philosophical contribution to Israel Studies in Musicology. "All historical arrangements and classifications depend," she insisted, "upon an ordering of materials according to some presupposition about the goal of the development." Because "history is not a search of laws" but rather "largely in search of meaning," historical analysis "is interpretive by definition[,] a conceptually structured selection of detail importing signification" (1983 [3]: 7-17, quoting p. 14).

Disciplinary Urban Renewal

Tonight, I would like to honor the work of Ruth Katz by following in her example. I want to walk along the street dividing social sciences and humanities, to think about why the city planners of our academic city (or cité) put the street where they did, and propose some urban renewal to make this street run another way. I will propose that we gentrify the social sciences; that we bring life into the grand spaces and mechanical dwellings of its often empty cité; that we curve its straight boulevards and bring in some coffee houses, book stores, and street vendors. Let's take down some walls and raise high the roof beams, letting the light of signification in! Let's sweep away the old dust of behaviorism and lay down the carpet of hermeneutics. Let's remodel action theory along the sleek new lines of performativity. Let's dress up the neighborhood of drab materiality with aesthetic ideas about the beautiful and sublime. Of course, this remodeled, twenty-first century cité would involve some changes

How Culture Changes: Looking Back at The Meanings of May – Paris 1968

Vera L. Zolberg, New School for Social Research

At its best, sociology is an ongoing conversation in which ideas are exchanged among scholars that sometimes lead to unexpected developments in knowledge. This is what occurred to me a year after re-reading a statement by Elizabeth Long on "Stories as Models," in which she proposed ways in which anecdotes and small stories may serve sociologists to introduce their work or exemplify a point. These, she argues, are actually "carriers of theory that do important cognitive work to create or revise conceptual categories and innovate theoretical models or frames." She has gone on to develop her ideas in fruitful ways, and I wish to pursue her suggestions in my field of interest, the sociology of collective memory.

This is a domain that has become popular largely, I believe, because it provides opportunities for us to delve deeply into history, identity, any many other issues of social construction. It is one, however, in which events have a habit of outweighing theoretical maturity. In reading Long I realized that the kinds of personal experiences that she calls upon are often hidden by scholars as lacking in scientific legitimacy and, I confess that I had a similar reaction when first reading Maurice Halbwachs' seminal works, in which he evokes his own memories, as well as literary works (Halbwachs 1980; 1992).1 Whereas anthropologists and postmodern analysts more generally have opened up these black boxes (Geertz 1995), I am now trying to overcome my earlier prejudices and will use the personal "stories" to help reveal a way of supporting the guidance that Long provides.

For those of us who were living in France during the year that seemed destined to mark the world as no other had done, it is hard to believe that four decades have passed since so much turmoil, promise, and disenchantment could have been jammed into so brief a moment. The impact of that era has seemingly been overshadowed by even more important events that will, no doubt, produce some of their own elations or disillusionments, but the "alumni" of that moment in Paris, as the late film maker, Jean Rouch, who lived through it as well, put it, were permanently marked, and would persist in viewing it as a formative utopian instant for themselves and for their world. Judging from the numerous attempts to assess the impact of the month, year, season – the time frame varies, depending upon how those events played out in different places around the globe - Rouch was correct in this early intuition that it has marked us, serving as a badge of kinship akin to that of a "graduating class," members of which sense a fictive community even if their experience took place in very different sites and nations, under divergent levels

from the humanities, too. Humanities theories centered on meaning often fail to explore the sociological contexts for signification. But this was certainly not the case with Ruth Katz, and it will not be a problem with which I am primarily concerned today. Today's social science is still way too concerned with contexts and not enough with signification.

Social science today – and here I am thinking most about sociology and political science -- is hobbled by the fact that it still looks longingly to what it imagines as the explanatory perfections and achievements of the natural sciences. It is hard to accept that social discoveries will never have the explanatory scope, much less the universal reach, of physics, biology, and chemistry. The social sciences seem always to be making an effort to catch up. I want to suggest that we give up this effort – not that we surrender rationality or give up theory but that we stop thinking of ourselves as in some queue for becoming a science in the English-language sense. Queuing to become a science obscures our own distinctive subjectivity -- the artfulness, morality, and imagination that go into social observation and theory. It also obscures the distinctive ontology of the world we are investigating. The social world is subjective; its structures are fueled by interpretation; its so-called laws are actually norms re-instituted time and again, dramatized every moment of every day. The realism of society and its investigation are achieved and performed; they are not naturally there. Thinking of ourselves as a would-be natural science deprives us of critical tools we need to be good students of the social. We need less statistics and more sign theory, less research design than methods for reading the social text, fewer techniques for making observations than for estimating the effectiveness of performance.

The Human Sciences

More than one hundred years ago, Wilhelm Dilthey brilliantly laid out the case for a human rather than a narrowly social science. "Human sciences" represents the conventional translation of his Geisteswissenschaften, literally the sciences of the spirit. Dilthey called his philosophical position "hermeneutics" (after Schleiermacher), and he emphasized, above all, the significance of interpretation as compared to observation. Interpretation must be central for the human sciences because, Dilthey insisted, there is an inner, invisible life pivotal for social action and order. To concentrate on the outer visible shell of human actions, as compared to this inner invisible spirit, is to mistakenly import into the human sciences concepts from the natural sciences, such as objective force and efficient cause. Insofar as the inner life of society becomes our focus, we must eschew the project of predictive science and universal law, though we can still strive for abstraction and

generalization and create models that withstand the march of historical time.

Dilthey's argument was extraordinarily controversial and remained very much a minoritarian view in modern social science, despite the valiant, if also ambivalent efforts of some Weberians, Durkheimians, phenomenologists, pragmatists, critical theorists, Parsonians, Geertzians, and Foucauldians to keep it alive. What developed, instead, was a split inside of the human studies, a split that has produced the grand canyon between the humanities and the social sciences across which we continue to peer today.

Texts, not Things

The standard objects of social science are social structures that seem objective, obdurate, and constraining to human will. According to Durkheim's famous, and famously ambiguous phrase (1894), "les faits socials sont comme les choses": Social facts are things, and meanings are formed in response. But we can see how this is precisely not the case if we cross to the other side of the street, to the humanities side. Yes, our objects remain social and structures, but they must now be seen as texts. Rather than following Durkheim's methodological stricture, we need to be responsive to Paul Ricoeur's declaration that "meaningful action must be considered as a text." We must learn to see organization, state, class, market, technology, commodity, ethnicity, race, gender, and urban space from the other side of the street. As patterned meanings, we must learn to read their texts. What are their culture structures? How do they mean? How are these subjective meanings crystallized and projected outward as essentalized facts? How are these textual messages received? How is their power variable? What are the texts that audiences form in response?

Binary Codes

Texts are composed of signs, not individual words; rather than practical and pragmatic speech acts, they are languages structured relationally as patterns of signifiers. We must get away from the side of the street that addresses social facts as the things, for this is only what they often seem to be. What is visible, what appears to be natural and thing-like, is actually a carrier for invisible meanings the signifiers for which are not there to be seen. We learned this from Ferdinand Saussure. His other, more specific semiotic insight, that the relation between signifiers is deeply binary in its form, was fully developed by his carping Russian disciple Roman Jacobson (the founder of the Prague School), and later refined by Claude Levi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, and Marshall Sahlins. The meaning of a thing never stands alone; it can only exist in relation to other meanings. They are binary at their core. Social facts may be "thing-like" in the sense of supra-individual, coming to individuals

Pascale's (2007) use of ethnomethodological and poststructural principles in her analysis of commonsense knowledge about race, class, and gender.

Scholars whose research on language ranges from sociolinguistics to poststructural discourse analysis are united by the desire to look at rather than through systems of communication. Yet it is somewhat curious that such a broad focus on language has been lacking at the ASA. Early in the 1970s, Joshua Fishman ("Author's Postscript" in Dil, 1972) described the failure of "sociology of language" to make any visible impact on American academic sociology, in spite of growing research by linguists and social scientists that bridged those disciplines. The times had seemed promising, exemplified by a 1964 meeting of key researchers around the country, supported by the Social Science Research Council's Committee on Sociolinguistics. The International Sociological Association (ISA) had a thriving Research Committee (RC) on Sociolinguistics, fed mainly by research from Western European and Russian sociologists. But no corresponding organizational response emerged in the ASA.1

From the '60s until now, sociologists in the United States have had recourse only to organizational strands that recently converged as ASA's section "Ethnomethodology & Conversation Analysis– EMCA" (one strand was originally called "Sociolinguistics & Conversation Analysis"). The EMCA represents some overlapping interests with members of the LCN who assembled at the ASA '08 to talk about sociological studies of language. However, for the most part, the EMCA has carved out research questions and techniques that do not easily accommodate the many approaches and more broadly conceived sociological studies of language that were being discussed at our Culture section roundtable, described below.

Language as an explicit focus of study can occasionally be found in the titles of papers presented in various Sections (e.g. Sociology of Education; Race, Class and Gender; and, especially Sociology of Culture). Further, the ASA does include "Language and Social Linguistics" as one of 72 topics that members may check as an area of interest. (Interestingly, "Language and Social Linguistics" is grouped under "Qualitative Methods," which is one of 17 broad topic areas, rather than under "Sociology of Culture.") "Language and Social Linguistics" also is used to index sessions in the annual Program (in 2008, only one session besides ours was indexed there.) And, "Language & Social Linguistics" is a category of "Special Programs" that graduate sociology programs can select to show in ASA's Directory of Graduate Departments. In 2008, only three did so (UC, Santa Barbara; UC Santa Cruz, and Indiana University.)

Outside the ASA, the most obvious similar organizational niche is, as already noted, the ISA.

Today the RC on Sociolinguistics has been replaced by the salient RC 25, "Language and Society," which emphasizes its large umbrella by listing 14 styles of analysis on its home page—and those are intended to be illustrative. Unfortunately, the cost of attending international meetings excludes many who are interested from ready access to that venue. Within the Linguistic Society of America, and other linguistics associations, "sociolinguistics" is well-established, but most sociologists interested in the study of language do not see themselves as linguists, nor have the requisite grounding in formal linguistics. Another cognate organizational niche is found in the National Communication Association, which has a section on "Language and Social Interaction", whose current program chair has a sociology Ph.D. Again, however, most sociologists with interests in language do not identify as scholars of communication.

Our ambition is to change this state of affairs; we want to provide a new venue (both virtual and in-person) for thinking about language by sociologists, for sociologists. Like many before us, we have turned to the Culture Section and its provision for establishing research networks as a resource for organizing ourselves, for establishing a core community of scholars who can begin to imagine and implement a new, diverse agenda for sociological research on language as an institution and for the study of language use as a foundational system of practices.

At ASA's 2008 meeting, nearly 30 sociologists crowded around one of the Culture roundtables to begin identifying colleagues and specific topics under the banner of "sociological studies of language." The session kicked off with one example of a proposed approach: Harrison White (2008a) presented a paper laying out his framework-in-process, making good on his promise in the updated 2nd edition of his classic Identity and Control (2008b), to extend his theory of "How Social Formations Emerge" through study of language and linguistics. After the presentation, participants traded ideas back and forth, trying to get a handle on what was being defined in the paper, what was being missed by current approaches, what might be created if we stood back and started afresh.

The crowd was a mix. Many were there to hear what Harrison would propose next in his ongoing project of reassembling a framework for sociological analysis. White, along with his students and colleagues has long been at the forefront of inventing new styles of cultural sociology that blend formal methods, especially techniques from social network analysis, with various research projects in the sociology of culture (Mohr and White, 2008). Others were there because their work already focused on other styles of sociological studies of language, or they were considering going in that direction, and they were intrigued by the

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prospect of meeting a collection of like-minded colleagues. Several attendees (as well as some who could not attend but wrote about their interest in the new network) hoped to link up professionally with people sharing their more specific interests. Relishing the rare opportunity for such a gathering in the U.S., the ensuing discussion of activities to be undertaken and ways to do so as a group, was energized and passionate.

Our goal is to approach the study of language in much the same fashion that scholars in this Section have approached the problems of culture. We take up the systematic sociological investigation of language as a social process through which all forms of materiality, structure and interaction gain meaning and relevance. The Language and Culture Network will reconvene in San Francisco where we will take up these matters once again; before that August date, the network is experimenting with online means to carry on collegial sharing of ideas, references, etc. We intend to push forcefully on the question of what new sociologies of language might look like and how we as sociologists might advance a more effective and more broadly integrated research agenda for our newly formed research network on Language and Culture. We invite you to join us!

from without. But their collective status is textual, not material, and it rests on binary codes. For social science to become a human science, it must draw all this from the humanities, but it must not do so without remainder. The manner in which binaries are applied involves social weighting, good and evil, in the late Durkheim's terms the sacred and profane. Binary categories are eminently social classifications. Morally and affectively weighted, they fuel scape-goating, oppression, and exclusion, but can inspire inclusion and liberation too. Boundary making illuminates social closure, boundary-crossing how it can be overcome (Barth, Alexander, Lamont).

Think, for example, of technology, of the first steam driven locomotives or computers in their early days as main frame and lap top. Should we see these as objects in the material sense? Only as material means invented and produced to more efficiently make money, achieve power, or conduct surveillance? Should we measure their impact only in terms of speed and calculation, as sustaining economic modes of production or political regimes of violence? Certainly social scientists would not wish to ignore any of this, any more than any humanities scholar would deny the social context that prevents or allows this or that aesthetic genre to come fully to life. But technology is also a text, a material embodiment, or referent, of signifiers that have propelled it into being every bit as powerfully as the physics, chemistry, and mathematics

that have contributed to its invention. And this textuality has contributed even more than these objective sciences to technology's effect.

I am thinking here of how the steam engine and computer signified the sacred and the profane. They were heralded as machines that embodied the hopes of modernity and would allow us to rise above the dreck and dirt of civilization. They were vehicles of salvation, promoted and capital invested as much for their dreams as their efficiencies. These new machines brought nightmares as well. They were feared as Frankenstein monsters whose advent would promote bloody industrial and postindustrial capitalism and new brutalities of war. They were condemned as iron horses and infernal new calculating machines. They would dehumanize the world, colonizing the life world in their wake. The great technologies of Western modernity in the nineteenth and twentieth century modernity were texts. They were defined relationally, not only denoted but connoted. They were instantiated in binaries, not only dichotomous variables but agonistic signs. The textual status of these technologies was more than metaphorical. These semiotic machines figured prominently in the great epic novels, poetry, and paintings of their times, and in the movies, television shows, and virtual visions of our own times as well.

Social Narratives

As my reference to salvation implies, exploring the textuality that makes social facts more than things also means going beyond the synchronic to the diachronic, from semiotic coding to narration. Signs not only dichotomize the meanings of their social referents but map their passage through time. Sacred and profane are plotted as protagonist and antagonist, and their conflicted relationship is explained as coherent causal sequence stretching from beginning, to middle, and end. Aristotle created narrative theory in his Poetics and employed it to explain the difference between the tragic and comedic Greek plays. Northrup Frye updated this sturdy account of meaning in reference to Shakespearian drama, explaining how ascending romance brings readers closer to the actors and stokes fervent feelings, while descending comic plots deflate passion by pulling reader identification away. Contemporary literary theory has demonstrated how narrative forms can be applied socially. Paul Fussell shows how ironic narrative replaced romance after World War I, fueling the pessimism that had such disastrous consequences in the interwar period. Peter Brooks interprets the simplifying certainty of nineteenth century melodrama as a response to the post-French Revolution destruction of religious faith, suggesting that such good guy/bad guy plots fueled the radical, all or nothing social conflicts of the

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day. Fredrik Jameson wields his critical, so-called negative hermeneutics to illuminate how capitalism creates tensions among genres that only hopes for revolution can assuage. Inspired by such social possibilities for narrative shaping, Victor Turner created his ingenious and fertile, if rather vague and remarkably underspecified, idea of social drama.

Narrative molding shows that any conception of merely material conflict fails to illuminate the manner in which social groups construct plots that feature themselves as dramatic sacred protagonists and cast their opponents as evil antagonists, narrative constructions that weight their rational arguments with moral immanence, predicting salvation with victory and apocalypse with defeat. The explanatory resources provided by game theorizing and rational choice pale in comparison. Yet, while ideas of narrative show that social facts are not things, the manner in which plots structure society can be specified only when this humanities theorizing takes on social form. Weber developed a four-fold typology of salvation, contrasting this-worldly and other-worldly and cross-cutting them with mystical versus ascetic forms. Whereas Weber restricted the reach of this implicitly narrative theory to pre-modern religion, Philip Smith has created a full blown narrative theory of modern war which allows, for the first time, political legitimation to be explained in a dynamic, fully cultural way.

Material Icons

If the kind of socially oriented human studies I have elaborated here leads away from materialism, does it make impossible an understanding of the power of things? This would certainly be a serious problem if it were so. Contemporary capitalist societies are filled to overflowing with magnetic commodities ranging from the beautiful to the grotesque, sensuous bodies, fashioned wrappings, music and muzac, addicting tastes and smells, and always the promises of even more, more, more. Can a culturally reconstructed social science explain such powers? Do we need to return to materialism to explain materiality? There is a wide swath of contemporary social science that says we must. Bruno Latour's "actor network theory" (ANT) describes person-thing interaction as mechanical and behavioral; actors respond not to the meanings of things but to information that is embedded in them. The suggestion is that, with digitalization, we live in societies increasingly ruled not by humans but by animated machines. In postmodern political economy, ANT combines with extravagantly revisionist Marxian theories about commodification and branding. Once again, things are the saddle, this time in dangerously capitalist ways.

If we are to mount a sociological response to these provocative but, in my view, deeply regressive

tendencies, we new to draw from the humanities once again, but this time from the plastic rather the literary arts. Aesthetic writing about painting and architecture conceptualize densely mediated encounters between actors and their objects. Faced with objects, we sense surface stimulation through form, through the lightness, smoothness, and symmetry of beauty, through the rough and painful darkness of the sublime. As Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht has suggested, we continuously convert materiality into aesthetic experience, rejecting materialism even as we resist discursive digression into cognition and away from sense feeling. While such contemporary aesthetic philosophers as Martin Seel and Bill Brown would actually substitute presence effects for meaning effects, and things for significations, Rom Harré is right to insist that objects are transformed into social stuff by their embedment in narratives. In empirical studies that follow up on such humanities insights, anthropologists like Daniel Miller and sociologists like Ian Woodward are bringing material things back in, but they are doing so in a cultural sociological way. As I have recently shown in my own work, materiality allows iconic consciousness, but iconic power is variable. It, too, must be understood in a performative way.

Against the Great Divide

In this talk, I have tried to explain why the great divide between humanities and social science is a bad thing. Only by overcoming this gulf can we understand how it is that social facts are not things but texts. When symbolic binaries and narratives anchor their referents in society, they constitute cultural structures of a social kind. As such, they can possess a collective force that recalls the irresistible power of the physical world. What differentiates social from physical force is the signifying nature of its power, which comes from collective energy and authority but also from the hermeneutic character of action itself. We weave our own webs of meaning, even as we are entrapped, and inspired, by those that preceded us. Performance mediates between the strictures of individual and group motivation and the meanings that structure institutional life.

of seriousness, ranging from mere discomfort to terrible risk.

These observations were brought to my attention when earlier this year I was invited to participate in just such an exercise in "collective memory" at my university, under the title "Moments of Madness."2 Other participants were members of the "1968 graduating class" with experience in Eastern Europe (Poland and Czechoslovakia), Paris, as well as faculty or students from a number of American universities. The audience of "alumni" like ourselves, forty years older, were eager to share their own experiences; but the majority were students, for whom the recollections were part of the lore, sometimes nostalgia, and occasional attempts at scholarly analysis as we struggled to grasp the temps perdu.

For Americans like myself, to be within walking distance of the Sorbonne, the Théâtre de l'Odéon, or the barricades of the Boulevard St. Michel, it seemed as if a new revolution might be in the works. On the other hand, having been invited to dinner by French friends, who insisted that their sons, university students, join us, we could not help feeling a certain degree of skepticism. How could we not, given that the meal was exquisite, the young men fashionably dressed in handsome tweed suit coats with suede elbow patches and flannel trousers (that era's "preppy" style), and upon leaving after having their dessert and espresso, promised their parents to be home before the C.R.S. (national police) started to throw tear gas canisters in their vicinity.

Our impression was further supported when, on another evening, at the Grande Amphithéâtre of the Sorbonne, we discovered that it was not only our friends' sons who dressed fashionably, but nearly everyone else - in what seemed to be the university students' uniform. In this immensely crowded setting, the degree of politesse was astonishing. It seemed as if every second phrase uttered was on the order of "Pardon monsieur; pardon madame." It was different for the presiders on stage, however, almost as if Goffman's front stage and back stage were reversed. The public face presented by the organizers was exemplified as they entertained motions to paint over the overbearing, allegorical mural of Puvis de Chavanne (a motion that I and some others would gladly have seconded), but it was voted down (if anyone was counting) (Goffman 1963).

More impressively, however, was the introduction by the presider of a man from the audience who looked different from the university students. This, announced the presider, was "un ouvrier," wearing a bulky brown leather jacket (clearly NOT an elegant Italian name brand) over his muscular frame. The audience seemed stunned into momentary silence; then burst into enthusiastic applause. Had they never seen a worker before? Bourdieu's analysis of habitus would have been

appropriate in that instance (1984 [1979]). These observations, I realized, helped me make sense of the more conventional analysis of the structure of the French state, the educational institution, and the system of inequality as adumbrated by Bourdieu (1964).

While I was in Paris, however, the participants at our symposium, especially those from Eastern/Central Europe, had experienced a very different 1968: the Prague Spring and its hopes for a humanistic communism, shattered by the invasion of Soviet tanks in August; the disquieting news from the United States, where Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated, followed not long after by the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy. News filtered as well from the Mexican government's assault and murder of perhaps over a hundred student demonstrators, and much other protest and repression around the world. By comparison, I began to think of the Parisian events as relatively minor – at best, problems of "the society of managed consumerism" – as Jean-Luc Godard showed in his films of that era, such as Weekend. But there was much more to it than could be expressed in something other than a flippant consumerism. What happened in France in 1968 had been brewing for more than a little time, with roots in the nineteenth century and much earlier if we think of the deeply centralized structure of the state. Not surprisingly, its most immediate causes are found in the structures of the institutions central to French political, economic, demographic, cultural and social organization.

What came to be called "the events of May" began on the troubled campus at a suburb of Paris called Nanterre, spread to the Latin Quarter of Paris, and from there gained much of France, flowing from the educational sphere into the realms of economic and political activity. During this period, following the lead of university students, almost every organized group in France voiced its demands simultaneously; potential groups suddenly were organized, adding their clamor to the general din; authority vacillated; the impact of demonstrations mounted; and finally while some groups retreated from the fray altogether, others settled down at the bargaining table to await their turn to negotiate.

Given the centrality of the educational institution to the emergence of the particular "moments of madness" in 1968, it seems logical to see its features – how it resembled those of other nations and what was particular to France. Serious trouble developed from 1963 on when the Gaullist government boldly decided to revamp what they saw as an outdated educational system. It had remained essentially unchanged since its design in the nineteenth century, during the early years of the Third Republic to suit that regime's specific civilian and military manpower

needs and to provide appropriate patterns of political socialization.

In an even longer French tradition that continues despite decades of political rhetoric to the contrary, education was centralized in policy and its bureaucratic implementation. Only now It was intended to foster commitment to Republicanism by institutionalizing meritocratic access to upper and middle positions, as well as bolster secularism in the dominant culture. But immediately after World War I, democratic critics started to question the authoritarianism of its methods and the advantages it gave to the bourgeoisie. While some reforms in elementary schools had been instituted earlier by the Popular Front government, the post primary level remained fairly untouched. Despite a variety of different kinds of secondary schools, only one kind, the lycée led to the university. But gaining access to it was not automatic. Admission was determined early: as in England's 11+ examinations, in France at about the same age, all school children had to pass the "entrée en sixième" examination. Generally, by age 11 one's educational future was determined – either a form of terminal high school or the university bound lycée. The idea had been meritocratic, but It turned out to be a barrier to entry into academic secondary school education. Another barrier was raised by the requirement of having to have studied Latin from early post primary entry, but only the lycée provided classical languages. Truly, this was not a system for "late bloomers," and the filtering process continued at later levels as well.

Only shortly before the second world war and immediately after the Liberation were serious proposals for reform introduced. In particular, democratic reformers tried to eliminate the highly esteemed Latin as the sine qua non for admission to the lycée and subsequently to the university. Those parents who could afford it provided their children with Latin as early as age 8, mostly by private tutoring or by enrolment in fee-paying classes, rather than free municipal elementary schools that did not offer it. Faculty members who opposed modernization used their influence to maintain separate schools and/or separate tracks within the new, post-war common high schools. But even the small changes that were instituted continued to reproduce similar results. Students of higher status parents were far more likely to be "advised" (oriented) into academic tracks and lower status students into terminal post primary schooling. On top of this, post World War II France's demography was changing in unforeseen ways. As the first western country to have reached "zero-population growth" in the nineteenth century, for the first time in nearly a century the birthrate rose dramatically, leading to overcrowding at every educational level in succession. The highly selective educational system

could not stem the numbers. At the university students became an anonymous mass to remote professors. Yet the total student body in the mid-1960s represented only 5 percent of the university age cohort; and of those in the university fewer than 10 percent were worker's children. Through a system of yearly examinations, most of them failed to pass exams for the more desirable faculties, such as medicine or law, or were "advised" into preparation for dead end employment – "the Faculty of Letters" and the least prestigious was sociology (Zolberg and Zolberg 1969).

Meanwhile, concerned about criticism of France's economic and technical backwardness compared to other nations, DeGaulle's Fifth Republic constructed more school buildings, hired more staff, and diverted students into other tracks than academic. But these responses contributed to the creation of new critical situations which provided a direct link to the events of May.

Nanterre was one of these reform ideas gone wrong. Although it was supposed to be a campus similar to those in the United States, and instead of the huge amphitheatres of the Sorbonne, moderate size class rooms were built, yet library and recreational facilities were put on hold. At the time a virtual shanty-town on the outskirts of Paris, it immediately became overcrowded, drawing many of its students not from Nanterre's working class residents, but from Paris itself; most of its faculty members commuted from Paris, generally did not bring their families and spent as little time there as possible. Faculty recruitment remained largely traditional, so that there was a chronic shortage of qualified instructors, leaving most of the teaching in the hands of low level adjuncts -- "assistants."

Unlike American teaching assistants, for whom this was a temporary position, in France it was a marginalized occupation that could last for a very long time, depending upon funding provided for new positions. Poor working conditions led to union organizing, some founded in protest against the Algerian War, but many also demanded improvements in the status of these marginalized assistants. Starting with bread and butter issues, eventually their organizations became a vanguard of the wave of opposition to the Fifth Republic's university reform, its authoritarian imposition with no consultation of those affected – faculty, students, their families – led the syndicates (unions) to denounce the technocratic orientation of the proposals, many inspired by American university developments – the "multiversity" attempt at Berkeley, for example -- as an adaptation of the university to the needs of capitalist society. This theme, elaborated simultaneously by the educational specialists of the Communist Party provided a framework which transformed debate over the reforms into a genuine ideological struggle over the future of

operation of this basic relationship. That is to say, to recognize that both power relations and cultural signifying practices and their relationships do operate differently in different spaces and with respect to different subjects involved...However, if this conceptual emphasis has been developed as part of an "international repertoire", its emergence in Brazil and Latin America can still be seen as related to particular national histories and contexts.

I think it is fair to say that a substantial part of those theoretical efforts have been connected to at least a conjunction of three processes: First, the emergence of the then called new social movements, especially in the contexts of the resistance against military dictatorships and other kinds of authoritarian regimes throughout the continent. Second, in several countries and surely in Brazil, this coincided with the critical renovation of Marxist theory that has been very influential in Political Science and in other disciplines. Third, and linked to those two factors, the question of democratic building and deepening became a crucial theoretical and political concern. I should point out what seems to be perhaps a Latin American feature of all social sciences, i.e. their intimate relationship and contiguity with actual political processes...

It was toward the understanding of the new political processes which were then taking shape and the political challenges they posed that the routes opened up by Gramsci's influence began to be increasingly explored. Thus, the problematic of democracy and the whole set of new correlated questions it implied constituted the scene where the Gramscian boom manifested itself. This particular setting seems to have determined a strong emphasis on the progressive or "revolutionary" possibility of hegemony as a project for the transformation of society. Such an emphasis contrasts with another readings of the concept, in Europe, for instance, which consistently explored its application to the analysis of the maintenance of the status quo and dominant power relations.

Looking (desperately?) for Cultural Sociology in France
Daniel Cefai, Institut Marcel Mauss, EHESS-Paris, cefai@ehess.fr

I will start my account at the end of the 1970s, when the Annales School in history, structuralism in anthropology and Marxism in sociology were left behind. What is important to realize is that many of the intellectual moves we did afterwards were done in reaction to the hegemony of these ways of thinking. It was hard to get rid of them...

For example, while you were discovering Bourdieu, through Lamont, Wuthnow or DiMaggio, Calhoun and Wacquant, and while Jeffrey Alexander was building his concept of "culture structures", in France, we were learning the rudiments of Erving Goffman, symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, pragmatics and ethnography of communication, in order to describe meaning-making activities. We were leaving aside structuralism and Marxism and trying not to start, by any means, our analysis with macro-structures.

To pursue this review of our differences, we were importing the Chicago school of sociology... to think about urban cultures while you were starting to read Henri Lefebvre. When the debate around multiculturalism was no longer news in the US, we imported the concept of ethnic cultures. And cultural studies, with their strong debt to Foucault and French literary criticism, remained peripheral to the study of media cultures in France... Nevertheless, our "pragmatist sociology" and your "cultural sociology" met at [a number of] points...

In the 1980's, the intellectual interest shifted from symbolic systems to meaning-making activities and their contexts. The problem was no longer to reconstruct systems of symbols, in order to study their structural consistency / or to link them with social structures and criticize their ideological or symbolic power. The watchword became situational analysis...

This pragmatist focus stresses not only narratives, but speech acts; not only representations, but lived emotions; not only discourses, but bodily attitudes and expressions as well. All this is constitutive of what you call "culture". The same words and deeds have different meanings in different settings. And what the people themselves call the "culture" of "civil services" should not be taken as a sociological explanation, but as a typical public account the people use to organize their experience, to live in a common world and to orient themselves as citizens.

As you see, we are close to what some of you do in the US (Eliasoph and Lichterman, 2003). And of course, we meet the same unresolved problems. How do we grasp "cultural patterns" beyond the contextual description of meaning-making activities? What is the connection between symbols and actions? What is the status of these "cultural patterns"? The debate remains open. Are they "cultural structures", grammars of public life, vocabularies of motives, language games, repertoires of dramaturgy and rhetoric?

The Problem of Translation, the Semantic Changes of the Concept of Culture in German Sociology, and the Promise of a Phenomenological Approach.
Thomas S. Eberle, University of St Gallen, Switzerland

What is at stake if we all changed to English as our intercultural language?

At stake is the richness of the cultural heritage and of the life-world, which is not adequately captured in a third language. There are different reasons for that, like the imperfect mastery of the foreign language and

the problem of 'untranslatables':

Although culture cannot be reduced to language, the mastery of language is crucial for intercultural communication. Even if you live in another language area, as I did in California, it takes years until you begin to understand the subtleties of the local life-world, like allusions, allegories, metaphors, ironies, jokes, and so on...You can express yourself in your mother tongue in a much more precise, differentiated and elaborated way. Thus, much of the cultural richness of your life-world is lost in such a communication.

Culture and language shape perception. Studies have shown that people of different languages interpret the same picture in different ways, using different interpretive frames (Lüdi 2003). Everybody who has learned to speak in a foreign language knows that it is often difficult and sometimes nearly impossible, to express something precisely or at least adequately in the other language. There are even 'untranslatables' which can only be understood in the local historical and cultural context, and their circumscription in another language sometimes requires creating neologisms or assigning new meanings to conventional words. How to translate Dilthey's 'Geisteswissenschaften', Rickert's 'Kulturwissenschaften', Weber's 'verstehen', 'Sinn' and so on, into English? Or how to translate Mead's 'mind' or 'self' into German? Or how to translate 'religion' into an Asian context? We are still struggling with it – and will do so forever.

The focus on 'untranslatables' may become a prolific road for intercultural research. The French philosopher Barbara Cassin (2004) has edited a "European Vocabulary of Philosophies. A Dictionary of Untranslatables" (in French). The current research project ESSE (Espace des sciences sociales européen, 2005-now), a research group of German, French and Swiss historians, does the same for historiographic research. The focus on 'untranslatables' forces us to develop a method, which allows for transmitting a historically and culturally specific meaning-complex into another language by adequate circumscription. In contrast to theoretical universalism, which operates with very abstract and anonymous concepts, the pondering of 'untranslatables' explores the cultural singularities and particularities of each culture.

Works cited and further readings are available at http://www.ibiblio.org/culture/newsletter .

French society.

It would be a mistake to think that all the assistants and students were united – in fact they became fragmented over the next couple of years – including CPF members who split into orthodox elements challenged by "Italians," "Cubans," "Maoists" and Socialists, who split into Trotskyite and Anarchist groups. Any or all of them came to denounce American policies in Vietnam, including some attacks on American establishments off campus. They seemed on the verge of clashing with the Occident group a pro-colonialist faction which had its origins in the Algerian War, and had since come to defend "traditional French institutions" and American foreign policy. It was probably the clashes within these groups that led the rector of the Sorbonne to call in the Paris police on May 3, 1968, a decision that can be viewed as the dramatic, but not unlikely climax of processes generated by existing institutional structures within the French educational system.

In the aftermath of the 1968 events, numerous commissions were set up to diagnose the problematic nature of institutions and patterns. The first and most striking of the findings was to try to alleviate the extreme selectivity of access to higher education brought about in part by institutional structures. The immediate solution offered made headlines in every newspaper in France: NO LATIN BEFORE THE 3rd YEAR OF SECONDARY SCHOOL.

My analysis does not account for the phenomenon of this extraordinary period in the world, or even in France, but it suggests that a multiplicity of institutional, demographic, political, historical and cultural patterns need to be marshaled in order to pinpoint the structures and processes that produce certain events. But it is important as well to bring to bear the increasing importance of technology of communication, the importance of media in conveying the responses of people to the particular set of patterns and structures they face. In addition to such study, the researcher's on-site observation and openness to the anecdotal can help us to understand the events that otherwise may have seemed either obvious or mysterious to those who lived through them.