



Winter 2002
Vol. 14. No. 1.

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& Essays

Comparative & Historical Sociology

The newsletter of the Comparative and Historical Sociology Section
of the American Sociological Association.

Editorial Preface

This issue features [Ann Swidler](#)'s paper on Cultural Repertoires which evoked the discussion in the [last issue](#) [Note by the webmanager: because of a mistake in the newsletter, the final version of Ann Swidler's paper was not published online until May 21.] We are also continuing the discussion of Charles Ragin's conceptualization of fuzzy-set social science with a critique by [James Hollander](#). Next, [Brian Gran](#) summarizes the CHS roundtable at the ASA in 2001. We are also presenting a contribution by [Behrooz Tamdgidi](#) about what he calls the 'sociology of self-knowledge.' Additional contributions are by [Levon Chorbajian](#) and [Hans Bakker](#). In the next issue, we will be featuring a critique by Stephen Turner of an article by Robert Marsh in the AJS (106). We would welcome other contributions reflecting on Marsh's comments concerning Weber's sociology of law. Contact hbakker@uoguelph.ca. We would like to acknowledge the technical assistance provided by Emily Wilson & Janice Vincent towards the production of this issue.

--JIB

"Diversity exists not only in the different configurations of set memberships that social phenomena exhibit but also in the degree to which they belong to such sets and configurations."

Ragin, Charles. 2000. *Fuzzy-Set Social Science*.
Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 149.

Cultural Repertoires and Cultural Logics: Can They Be Reconciled?

Ann Swidler

Department of Sociology
University of California, Berkeley

This paper asks whether we can reconcile ideas of culture as embodying some internal "logic" and the idea that culture works like a tool kit or repertoire—with many parts among which people pick and choose. It argues that the relations of repertoires and logics emerge more clearly when we see how culture works differently at different levels and locations in social organization.

First, if we look at culture by trying to understand what is in individuals' heads, we discover that people "know" much more culture than they use. Second, individuals sustain a lot of unconnected, sometimes contradictory, or simply uncoordinated cultural stuff in their repertoires. People make selections from their repertoire based on problems of action. Because they face many different kinds of problems with differing structures, they keep on tap multiple, sometimes discordant, skills, capacities, and habits.

Collectivities also have wide repertoires of cultural materials available. Like a library that holds more books than any one person could ever read, a "culture" contains an array of resources that people can draw on in different ways. Scholars such as Lamont and Thévenot and their collaborators (Lamont and Thévenot 2000) demonstrate that there are diverse "repertoires of evaluation" in the United States and France, so that differences between the two national cultures are best seen as different emphases and selections from repertoires with many overlapping possibilities.

Cultural Logics

If there are repertoires of diverse cultural possibilities at both the individual and the collective levels, then what happens to the idea of cultural logics? Is the very idea of culture useful if it does not imply some sort of patterned logic, rather than just a hodge-podge of symbols and meanings? William Sewell, Jr. (1999) has suggested that concrete cultures—the actual collection of meanings, schemas, beliefs, and symbols with which a people live—may be quite incongruent. But analytically understood, because culture is a semiotic system for creating or conveying meaning, it is necessarily unified. Particular messages, images, or ideas would make no sense unless there were a coherent code against which they could be decoded or understood. Recognition that in its analytic aspect culture presumes some unified logic does not, however, suggest what the principles of that logic might be.

Institutional Logics

If cultural logics come in many forms (deductive, binary, or narrative, for

example), we are forced to think about whether the concept of a cultural logic is useful at all. I believe it is, if we ask what might generate and reproduce diverse logics, which would nonetheless have constraining power. One source of systematic cultural logics is institutions. Institutions “induce” cultural logics, as culture helps actors bridge the gaps institutions leave. In *Talk of Love* (2001), I show that dominant understandings of love help people navigate dilemmas of action created by the institution of marriage (and by non-marriage relationships patterned on marriage). Romantic Love describes the all-or-nothing, exclusive, life transforming, and enduring experience that corresponds to the institutional structure of marriage. Prosaic-Realistic Love delineates the gradually-developing, uncertain, continually-renegotiated, intimate experience of an ongoing marriage relationship.

These two logics of the culture of love demonstrate three points about the relation between institutions, cultural repertoires, and cultural logics. 1) First, culture and institutions are “reciprocal” not homologous. The culture that organizes individual action emerges in the gaps institutions leave. Thus when courtship is a matter of individual initiative, while marriage is strongly institutionalized, “love” is about courtship (the all-or-nothing decision about whether and whom to marry), while marriage itself is little elaborated culturally. When marriage becomes more problematic, as in our era, then the marriage relationship is culturally elaborated (with a prosaic-realistic culture about communication, compromise, and commitment), because staying married is a major problem for people. Institutions set the problems actors solve, and culture organizes those solutions. 2) Second, since there are many possible ways to negotiate the gaps institutions create, there are often rich repertoires of alternative cultural meanings. 3) Third, where people confront similar institutional dilemmas, their cultural repertoires will consist of varying solutions to similarly structured problems, and the various solutions will have a consistent “logic”—not a psychological logic, but an institutional one.¹

Orders of Disorder: Where Logics and Institutions Intersect

The view of culture as related to institutional logics (see the very similar position of Friedland and Alford 1991) raises the larger question of whether and how differing institutional logics intersect or remain distinctive. But addressing this question—that of the coherence and incoherence of cultures at larger global and societal levels—requires making distinctions among a variety of things we lump under the term “culture” (see Jepperson and Swidler 1994).

Semiotic Codes

In addition to inducing “lines of action” and the culture that organizes them, institutions “entail” certain sorts of cultural accompaniments (see D’Andrade 1984). Primary among these are the “semiotic codes” that accompany institutional arrangements and allow people in a given community to communicate (and negotiate) their position with respect to that institution. For example, engagement and wedding rings, for those who know the code, signal marital status. While, in this example, the code depends on the institution (without marriage, wedding and engagement rings couldn’t mean what they do), the code can change independently of

the institution. For example, the use of Miss and Mrs. to distinguish unmarried from married women has given way to "Ms." without a corresponding elimination of the institutional significance of marriage.

Such semiotic codes (for example, the elaborate mourning customs Jane Collier [1997] found among Spanish villagers in which the burdensomeness of mourning signaled both the importance of the person who had died and the closeness of the mourner's relationship) have a the powerful logic of a coherent signaling system: one cannot simply change one element without wrecking the code; and people find themselves constrained by the code whether they "believe" in it or not. Such codes are not a repertoire from which actors can pick and choose, but are like a language: you have to follow the rules if you want to be understood, and sometimes even inadvertent deviations from the code will be "misunderstood."

Institution-Generating Logics

As Frank Dobbin (1994) has argued, national societies often seem to have favored models for solving social and political problems, applied across varied arenas. Thus, Dobbin notes, the French favor state initiative in response to many social and economic problems, while Americans favor "free market" solutions, and the British prefer to preserve the autonomy independent entrepreneurs. Dobbin argues that such models arise from the national experience of creating political order, generalized to provide an account of the sources of economic progress and social order. Here we find cultural logics that are generalized beyond particular institutional spheres and that seem to have a compelling logic of their own.

There are three distinguishable cultural processes at work here, which operate in somewhat different ways. These are "authoritative public models," "widely available habits," and "collective action schemas." In this summary, I will discuss only collective action schemas, such as American voluntarist associationalism. Charles Tilly, William Sewell, Jr. and Sidney Tarrow, among others, analyze repertoires of collective action schemas. Such repertoires are genuinely collective in that they consist of the modes by which collective action can be organized in a given community. Such schemas, while they may be stored in part in the consciousness of individuals, operate as widely understood, shared templates. Thus they are publicly enacted on ritual occasions, described in widely disseminated myths, and broadly shared, at least in the sense that everyone knows that everyone else knows them.²

I argue in *Talk of Love* that such models of collective action change infrequently (not necessarily slowly—indeed, they may change quite abruptly when collective crises allow everyone to see at once that everyone has seen that the king doesn't rule anymore, that powerful leaders can be deposed, or that "people power" can work). But even such collective action schemas—which need public validation, or at least the collusive knowledge that "everyone knows" that "everyone knows" that things can be done this way—can be part of a larger repertoire. Indeed, Sewell (1990) writes of France during the period from the Revolution to 1848 when the old corporate forms of collective action remained dominant because the French state suppressed the newer associationist forms that had emerged during the Revolution.

American "voluntarism" is the set of ideas and practices according to which people with common interests form social groups by joining together voluntarily to act on those interests. Varenne (1977) sees voluntarist individualism as a generalized cultural code that Americans use to constitute group life in all arenas, from family, to government, to religion. But he misses the point that while voluntarist individualism provides a mythic way of understanding what social relationships are about, Americans lead most of their lives—from their employment relations, to their family relations, to the bureaucratic authority that governs much of their day-to-day experience—in organizations that are not voluntarist associations at all.

The persistence and the mythic power of the voluntarist imagery come from its distinctive role as the fall-back or "default option" for collective action in America. This means that it has to be shared—there is no point in invoking a form of collective action that isn't collectively understood. It is enduring—because it can change only in public ritual moments when everyone can see that everyone else can see that everything has changed (see Sewell 1996 on "events"); and it is rehearsed frequently in the form of public myths, rituals, and narratives—because even when it is used infrequently, people need to be familiar with it, to have it on hand.

In summary, distinguishing when culture has its own coherent "logic," and when it operates like a repertoire of diverse, disconnected possibilities requires analyzing the different kinds of culture that operate at different levels of social organization.

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Notes

1. When the same, apparently "unrealistic" ideas continually recur, our temptation is to blame advertising, or television, or some mysterious process of "hegemony." But to paraphrase Marx, the problem is not false consciousness, but true consciousness of false institutions. Even cultural meanings people think they have rejected, such as the belief in romantic love, continually recur in their thinking as long as the same institutions set the problems they have to solve.

2. See the remarkably similar formulation in Michael Suk-Young Chwe's *Rational Ritual* (2001).

Note by the webmanager:

Because of a mistake in the newsletter, the final version of Ann Swidler's paper was not published online until May 21, 2002.



A Quick Look at Ragin's "Fuzzy-Set Social Science"

James F. Hollander

Texas Instruments Incorporated
Dallas, Texas

At ASA 2001 in Anaheim, the ASA Section on Comparative and Historical Sociology Section sponsored "Author Meets Critics: Fuzzy-Set Social Science" by Charles Ragin. Afterwards, this newsletter piece was invited. Page numbers, without more, cite to Ragin.

In his recent book, Ragin (2000: 11) observes that correlation and interval- and ratio-scale variables conventionally are not used to address or incorporate set-theoretic relationships that are the "bread and butter" of theoretical argumentation of a more qualitative type.

For example, suppose independent quantitative variable x is an index of qualitative type X , and that dependent quantitative variable y is an index of qualitative type Y . The same correlation value between variables x and y can result from and mask entirely different set relationship possibilities, namely: 1) social agents in type Y constitute a subset of (are entirely among) the social agents in type X , or 2) the reverse case – social agents in type X constitute a subset of (entirely among) the social agents in type Y , or 3) some social agents in type Y are among those in type X and other social agents in type Y are not among those in type X .

In the example, the theoretical "if-then" relationship or even causal interpretation of the relationship of quantitative variables x and y is strongly influenced by the set relationships between qualitative types X and Y . Ragin (: 10) offers fuzzy sets as a tool to encourage sociologists to choose, focus on, redefine or reinterpret the quantitative variables x and y as degrees of membership in the sets identified by types X and Y .

Thus, qualitative set relationship information and methodology are more fully integrated with quantitative methods for large data sets. Sociologists "do not have to forfeit the study of variation by level in order to study cases as configurations or to explore causal complexity" (: 16).

The mathematical concept of "fuzzy set" proposed by Lotfi Zadeh (1965) was recognized as having relevance to legal analysis (Kandel 1986: 73) and the social sciences (Smithson 1987: 2-5). An ordinary ("crisp") set consists of elements in the set (e.g., the set of all even numbers or the set of all Protestants) with membership 100%. All other elements are not in the set and are disregarded.

Fuzzy set theory generalizes the set concept by associating with each element a membership value expressed as a particular percentage in the range zero to 100% (153-155). For example, the fuzzy set of "Democratic Countries" has all countries indeed as elements, and membership percentages are recognized for all. None are disregarded.

Fuzzy sets model the way words and definitions work in language, and

connectives like AND, OR, NOT and numerous combinations thereof give the sociologist a fuzzy set logic and considerable power to investigate causal relationships and define and derive new types, concepts and variables (Ragin: 300-304, Smithson: 251). Moreover, fuzzy sets provide a useful if-then entailment perspective on bivariate data that exhibit considerable heteroscedasticity such as in scatter plots having triangular regions filled with data points (Ragin: xiii, 234-8; Smithson: 252; compare linear regression heteroscedasticity problem in Chatterjee, Hadi & Price 2000: 86, 161-3, 181-99).

Fuzzy sets are useful for representing ideas about not only clear relationships but also vagueness and possibility in if-then theory discourse too. Fuzzy set theory, in another notable feature, relaxes the Law of the Excluded Middle in ordinary set theory. The Law of the Excluded Middle asserts that the set of all elements which are both in a set X and its complement set not-X, is a set with no members at all – a null set. In fuzzy set theory, elements which are on the fuzzy boundary of one-half membership (50%), the area of maximum vagueness of the fuzzy set type definition, do have high membership values in the intersection-set of both X and not-X, symbolized by XX .

This special set XX figures prominently in a first aspect as an issue set for conflict analysis where sociologists, or the power groups they study, can and do contradict or contend with each other (Hollander 1998 Part II: 4-11). Either contending viewpoint or power interest can argue that a given fact, norm and/or rule indeed leads to one or the other of two opposite results respectively contended for. In a second aspect, two opposing viewpoints lead to the same result in the area of overlap XX thus allowing theoretical scope restriction or political common ground. In a third aspect, XX itself is a significant theoretic variable because it defines elements or areas where social or cultural contradictions lie and thus illuminates possible points of emergence in the sociology of history. Similar comments can be made about intersections of distinct fuzzy sets (Smithson 1987: 61-62)!

Has Ragin's 352-page paperback made a worthwhile contribution? This reviewer is pleased to say yes, based on the clear examples and illustrations, the relevance to research as sociologists experience and do it, and the helpful comparisons to alternative and complementary methods. Ragin himself does not pretend to treat his subject exhaustively or in the most rigorous mathematical manner that a purist might demand. However, the book accessibly introduces the fuzzy set analysis approach in a manner useful to students of methods in their research practice and adequate for teaching a component of graduate course material.

James F. Hollander is a founding member of the ASA Mathematical Sociology Section, 1994. E-mail: mrsocion@aol.com. He is a Senior Counsel in the Law Department of Texas Instruments Incorporated, Dallas, Texas, which is not responsible for this article.

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Roundtable: CHS at ASA 2001

Brian Gran

Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology
& Faculty Associate, Center for Health Services Management
& Research and Sanders-Brown Center on Aging
University of Kentucky

The roundtables sponsored by the Comparative-Historical Section for the 2001 annual meeting presented diverse substantive topics and analytical approaches, yet all papers shared the cross-cutting theme of innovation. This essay is intended to give section members an impression of topics discussed during the roundtables. (For each topic I identify authors and their email addresses for contact purposes).

Several papers focused on "new" concepts, including new institutions and new social movements. Carolyn Hsu (Colgate University, chsu@mail.colgate.edu) presented "Narratives and New Institutions: The Role of Cultural Repertoires in the Construction of Market Socialism in China," which is based on research conducted in Harbin, China, from 1997 to 2000. Hsu uses narrative analysis to argue that new institutions are co-created by ordinary people whose strategies of action and patterns of participation directly affect the shape of economic practices as they become institutionalized. Eventually, certain narratives become associated with certain practices, with important implications for how that practice will be eventually institutionalized.

Doowon Suh (University of California at Berkeley, dwsuh@socrates.berkeley.edu), presented "Institutionalization of New Social Movements and Development of Democracy: Theories and Debates." Suh argues that

institutionalization, as opposed to co-optation or pre-emption, of social movements can be a significant cause of democratic development. Suh focuses on social conditions and historical backgrounds to contend that the positive effects of movement institutionalization on democratic development is contingent, not general.

Two papers returned to the past to discuss contemporary social relations. Andrea Lynn Smith (Lafayette College, smithal@lafayette.edu) presented "Gender and Memory: Settler Narratives of the French-Algerian War (1954-1962)." Smith suggests that models of social memory can be renewed with a conscious consideration of the problem of gender. Because social memories of men and women in any one community may differ, gender necessarily calls our attention to the heterogeneity and plurality of group social memories. Using an ethnographic approach that locates social memory in speech, she explores gender distinctions in settler narratives of the French-Algerian war (1954-1962) and highlight how power, history, and war roles shaped these narratives and the ways men and women talked about this past.

J.I. "Hans" Bakker (University of Guelph, hbakker@uoguelph.ca) presented "Weber's Ideal Type Model of Patrimonial-Prebendalism: The Case of Java, Indonesia." Bakker argues that sociologists can employ Max Weber's Ideal Type Model of Patrimonial-Prebendalism to analyze recent political changes in Java, Indonesia. In essence, the recent change in government (from Abdurachman Wahid to Megawati Sukarnoputri) is a reconfirmation of the Prebendal model and in many respects represents more of a return to Traditional Authority (Herrschaft) than to Western European style nineteenth century Liberalism. This runs counter to the ideas expressed in the popular media about the democratization of Indonesia since Suharto.

Important contributions were made to the study of social policy, but from distinct perspectives. Celia Winkler (University of Montana, cwinkler@selway.umt.edu) presented "Equality and Freedom: Family and Labor Policies in Sweden and the United States." Winkler compares U.S. and Swedish social policies. According to Winkler, U.S. social policies by imagining families as a unitary, static entity, U.S. social policies have tended to counterpose equality and freedom. In contrast, Swedish social policies, founded upon the social individual, have created a condition whereby equality creates the pre-condition for freedom. This relationship arose from a discursive movement that conceived the "economically independent" woman and "human" man as the basis for all social and labor policy. This lesson may be useful for policy advocates in the U.S. in constructing alternatives to today's "family unfriendly" social policies.

Elizabeth Clifford (Towson University, ecliffor@saber.towson.edu) presented "Family Ties: An International Comparison of Family Reunification Immigration Policies." In countries of immigration such as the United States, large portions of the flow of immigrants enter through family reunification policies – as the spouses, children, parents, and other relatives of residents and citizens. Clifford's paper is a comparison of family reunification policies in a sample of western, industrialized countries. In creating such policies, governments make clear statements as to who belongs in their countries as well as which types of families belong, and which types of relationships are privileged in those models of

family. Clifford discusses the roles of race, gender, class, and sexuality in determinations of whether or not to allow residents to sponsor relatives, and who counts as a relative for the purposes of family reunification immigration. This paper is preliminary work on a larger research project examining the impact of family reunification policies on U.S. citizens and residents involved in sponsoring, or being sponsored by, family members.

Considering methodological approaches to the study of social policy, Pamela Behan (University of Houston Downtown, behanp@dt.uh.edu) presented "QCA in the Academy: The Joys and Perils of a New Method." Behan considers Qualitative Comparative Analysis, a new research method first introduced by Charles Ragin in 1987 that has the potential to become the methodology of choice for small-N comparative studies. Still rapidly evolving, little known and less understood in the Sociology departments of many colleges and universities, it offers to its users both the joys of a unique expertise and the perils of having one's work misunderstood by colleagues steeped in more widely accepted methods. In 1999, Behan utilized Ragin's original QCA method to examine the politics of national health insurance at different points in time in Australia, Canada and the United States, and found that only two configurations of political institutional and social democratic conditions preceded the passage of national health insurance legislation in these nations. The application of the newest development in Q.C.A., fuzzy set analysis, to the same data appears to support some of the original findings and challenge others.

Two scholars concentrated on social activism. Julie Shayne (Emory University, jshayne@emory.edu), presented "Unconscious Feminist Consciousness: The Women's Movement in Post-Insurrection Cuba (1959-1999)." In this paper Shayne traces the status of women in post insurrection Cuba (1959-1999). She argues that in some social structural realms (namely education and health care) the status of women has markedly improved. However, in the arena of power and politics women still remain a marginalized sector of society. Theoretically she suggests that Cuba functions by way of revolutionary androgyny and that due to many of the ideological and social advances in post-insurrection Cuba women have internalized a sense of equality with men ("unconscious feminist consciousness") which ironically led to a backlash against feminist mobilization. The data in this paper are based on field research in Havana, Cuba in the summer of 1999 where Shayne conducted nineteen in depth interviews with active feminists, scholars of gender, and revolutionaries, spent time in a variety of archives, and supplemented this information with secondary socio-historical data from the United States.

Wei-Der Shu (Syracuse University, shuweider@aol.com) presented, "The Social Composition of Political Activists affiliated with Clandestine Political Organization." Shu focuses on activists affiliated with Overseas Taiwan Independence (OTIM), especially those residing in the United States. Based upon the in-depth interview with twenty-four OTIM activists and two other published data sets about the demographic characteristics of OTIM activists, Shu analyzes the social composition of these activists while grappling with two approaches dominant in the social movement literature: the marginality thesis and privilege thesis.

Mark Whitaker (University of Wisconsin, mwhitake @ssc.wisc.edu), presented "Raw Materials and the Division of Labor." Whitaker argues for

direct causal effects in how raw materials influence urban morphology and political economic relationships. Specifically, what is discussed is a "natural experiment" comparison that relates how the physical science characteristics of raw materials are related to different relative degrees of social stratification, technological creation, and state political power in society. All of these topics are typically discussed as "entirely human" topics, when they are actually linked back to a deciding element, the physical characteristics of raw materials. Thus there is a social quality to all raw materials, in how the physical science qualities of raw materials are connected to the penchant for technological expansions around certain raw materials due to their technological amenability, and the important factor of state politics of "raw material regimes" that maintain the flows of certain forms of consumption around raw material substrates. Whitaker's paper argues for a generalized though contextual model of the process of urbanization for discussing how the environment and the human "realm" interact simultaneously and inescapably, always. Evidence is researchable through the variations in the process of urbanization worldwide. As both a theoretical statement and an empirical proof, this paper's contribution is the proposing of model that alleviates the sociological difficulty of discussing human and environmental relationships, which are typically discussed with a great amount of reductionism.



Building A Sociology of Self-Knowledge: One Brick At A Time

Mohammad H. (Behrooz) Tamdgidi
Sociology Department and
Life Course Studies Program
SUNY, Oneonta

Have you ever taught a course in which students are required to research their selves throughout the course? This involves not simply doing a self-reflective exercise or essay, but critically studying (and perhaps changing) their selves using various sociological frameworks--and receiving credit for it. Why is it that in our universities we encourage learning about all and everything in the universe, but not studying our own selves in comparative and historical context?

The quotations below represent comments made by various students enrolled in courses I have offered at the SUNY campuses at Binghamton and Oneonta since 1997. For some of those who took the courses seriously, it turned out to be a life-changing experience.

"Your class has had a positive influence on me and has changed not only the way in which I see myself, but also the way I see and think about everything in my life."

"This class has by far been the most worthwhile class I've taken... I have learned more in this class than I have in any other."

"After the paper I began to see things in a different light. I never took a course that forced its way into my mind and thought as much as this one did."

"Yes, it helped me cope with issues I hadn't been able to before. This course is more conducive to learning than most I've taken."

"This course, I believe, enables the student to contemplate their entire life. Not many classes can even compare to that."

What these courses shared, despite their seemingly standard academic titles, was their common use of the sociology of self-knowledge as a strategy for learning. Each course required students to engage throughout the semester in ongoing self-exploratory sociological research focusing on a specific unresolved lifelong issue. They were required to link their self-explorations to the study of society at large. Robin Williams films, such as *Patch Adams*, *Good Will Hunting*, and *Awakenings* have been particularly useful for this purpose. These films introduce a vital element of emotional self-observation and change typically absent in conventional teaching methods.

The sociology of self-knowledge is a new field of research. It is concerned with the dialectics of personal self-knowledge and world-historical social structures. It addresses the problem of how individuals can understand their world-historically constructed selves, and perhaps change them. Conceptually, this approach originated in a critique of the Mannheimian sociology of knowledge. An expanded version of that critique can be found in my forthcoming dissertation on "Mysticism and Utopia: Towards the Sociology of Self-Knowledge (A Study in Marx, Gurdjieff, and Mannheim)" (Binghamton University). The dissertation also contains the origins of the concept of "human architecture" and its relationship to the sociology of knowledge. A broad outline of the paradigm is presented in the editorial prospective for the soon to be launched *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*.

Human architecture and the new sociology of self-knowledge relate to one another as practice to research, as whole to part. Human architecture is about tearing down walls of human alienation, and building integrative human realities in favor of a just global society. The sociology of self-knowledge explores how everyday personal self-identities and world-historical social structures constitute one another. And the forthcoming journal seeks to chronicle the creatively evolving spiral of their dialectical journey toward untapped human potentialities.

Human Architecture maintains that all human failures at self and broader social change in favor of the good life are rooted in the problem of habituation, i.e., the human propensity to become subconsciously attached to sensations, ideas, feelings, things, relations, and processes. Decisive among these habituations are the dualisms of theory/practice,

self/society, and matter/mind--by-products of dualistic oppositions of materialist and idealist world outlooks lasting for millennia. These dualisms are responsible for the world-historical fragmentation of the essentially creative human search for the good life into mutually alienated and thereby failing paradigms of philosophy, religion, and science--giving rise to equally fragmented and mutually alienated western utopian, eastern mystical, and global academic movements.

The splitting of the inherently artistic and creative human spirit into its ideological components more or less correspond to the world-historical transitions of ancient civilizations to classical political, medieval cultural, and modern economic empires--for which the dialectics of nomadic vs. settled modes of life paved the way in the course of an increasingly synchronous global development. The postmodern condition can be considered as a general crisis of all fragmented paradigmatic structures, modern and/or traditional.

It follows, then, that the good life will not be the gift of a wise few, of supernatural forces beyond, or of an objectively preordained natural or historical progress. Human de-alienation can only be an artistic endeavor by each and all--only within a creative humanist framework can the habituated dualisms and fragmentations of philosophy, religion, and science be overcome while preserving their true meanings and contributions. We will try to demonstrate that all dualisms can be effectively transcended through their conscious and intentional re-articulation as diverse manifestations of part-whole dialectics. The habituated common sense definition of society as separate systems of relations among "individuals" - based on ahistorical presumptions of human "individuality" - will be rejected in favor of its definition as a singular world-historical ensemble of intra- inter- and extra-personal self relations. It will be argued that human life can be harmonious only when it is a world-system of self-determining individualities. Contributions of western utopianism, eastern mysticism, and the academy will be critically explored within an integrative framework. Human architecture will be introduced as the spatiotemporal art of design and construction of part-whole dialectics in everyday life. It will focus on building alternative world-historical realities in the midst of the personal here and now.

Human Architecture will transcend the habituated dualisms of young and old, undergraduate and graduate, student and teacher, in and outside classroom, on- and off-campus, academic and non-academic, knowledge and feeling, mind and body, private and public, society and nature, reality and imagination, and philosophy, religion, science, and the arts--east and west. It will disempower the social stratifications of class, status, and power arising from economy, culture, and politics in favor of recognizing the all-encompassing stretch of human alienation--fostering new sociological imaginations more conducive to a shared human liberation project.

M. H. "Behrooz" Tamdgidi, (Ph.D./M.A., Sociology, Binghamton University; B.A., Architecture, U.C. Berkeley), br00195@binghamton.edu

Note by the sitemaster: The online version of this essay has been updated by the author, May 8, 2002.



The Making of Nagorno-Karabagh: From Secession to Republic

Levon Chorbajian

University of Massachusetts, Lowell

Nagorno-Karabagh is an Armenian populated enclave in the south Caucasus assigned to Soviet Azerbaijan in 1921 by Soviet Commissar of Nationalities Joseph Stalin as part of a policy of bolstering ties with Kemalist Turkey while sowing the seeds of discord among the peoples of the Transcaucasus. In 1988, Armenian mass demonstrators demanded the re-unification of this territory with Soviet Armenia. Eventually armed conflict broke out between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces that resulted in over 20,000 deaths. A ceasefire established in 1994 has held to the present, but there is no peace settlement, and Nagorno-Karabagh exists as an impoverished renegade state recognized by no other. This collection brings together a talented group of sociologists, anthropologists, historians, political scientists and geographers who analyze the evolution and development of this conflict, in many cases on the basis of first hand field experience.

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Modernism and Post-Modernism in Light of SR and RS: Some Neglected Scholarly Contributions to Chinese, Japanese and Indian Religious Perspectives

J. I. (Hans) Bakker

University of Guelph

This newsletter is devoted to Comparative-Historical Sociology (CHS) as a sub-disciplinary "section" of sociology, primarily American sociology. Contributors have attempted to clarify theoretical and methodological issues, as well as promoting different foci of study. Should we study "collective behavior" using positivistic-naturalistic methods? Should we examine "cultural repertoires" using more interpretive approaches? Are "revolutions" best studied from a Critical-Marxist perspective? Is "gender" as an object of CHS study best comprehended through a Feminist paradigm? Etc. In general, "What should be our 'objects' of study?" and "How should we study them?" Swidler, for example, argues in favor of concentrating on "meaning-making processes," especially "collective identity formation in social movements" as an object of study. She favors a method that emphasizes "institutionalized practice" rather than "action."

One interesting example of "the construction of meaning" in terms of "collective identity in a politicized context" is "religious belief systems." Religious dogmas are an important object of study in classical sociological theory. In "pre-modern" (pre-Enlightenment) European societies the institutionalized religions had a major impact on "cultural repertoires."

One key methodological problem is whether to study religious "dogmas" from a CHS perspective or a more "humanistic" interdisciplinary perspective. There is a clear administrative distinction made in university curricula and departments between "the sociology of religion" (SR) and "religious studies" (RS). Frequently those sociologists of religion (SR) who study religious phenomena comparatively and historically do not pay sufficient attention to comparative and historical aspects of the interdisciplinary field of religious studies (RS). Yet, when the CHS of religion (in SR) and religious studies (RS) -- as a comparative and historical interdisciplinary pursuit -- join together, the synergy can be powerful. Brief mention of a few relatively less well known publications is warranted. (These are books and chapters which are well known to specialists in SR or RS, but not well known to CHS generally.)

Andre Padoux (1963, 1975, 1990) deserves to be better known, for example, outside of the very specialized part of RS which concentrates on classical Indian tantra. His meticulous scholarship on Hindu Tantrism provides perspective on the notion of "cultural repertoires" that deserves attention from sociologists who have no particular interest in the sociology of religion (SR) but are concerned with CHS generally.

Similarly, Reinhard May's careful textual analysis of Heidegger's Being and Time in light of the largely unacknowledged East Asian sources of some of his more provocative ideas about Nothingness and Death deserves to be better known to those interested in theories and methodologies of CHS. Earlier work on the "genesis" of Heidegger's magnum opus by Kisiel is further rounded out when we place Heidegger into a broader CHS

framework. Graham Parkes' essay on Heidegger's Japanese influences just prior to WWII is a beautiful example of the institutional context of cultural repertoires. Such scholars as Kuki Shuzo, Yamanouchi Tokuryu, Tanabe Hajime, Miki Kiyoshi and Nishida Kitaro may have been as important a source of what are now often considered "post-modernist" ideas as Heidegger's more explicitly recognized roots in Pre-Socratic Greek philosophers.

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