

# Culture

Section of the American Sociological Association

## A Message from the Chair

*Barry Glassner*

*University of Southern California*

One of my principal goals for my chairship is to encourage conversation between members of the section throughout the year, both in the newsletter and on the discussion forums that our web sovereign, Andy Perrin, has developed at the section's website. In my view, the quality and quantity of discussion at our sessions at the annual meetings and at other conferences is outstanding and ought to continue through other means when we are unable to meet face-to-face.

To begin that process, and in line with the theme of this year's ASA meetings and some of my own professional interests in recent years, I have opted to devote this issue's "message from the chair" section to discussions of public sociology. I invited five public sociologists who have made significant contributions to the sociology of culture—Cynthia Fuchs Epstein, Joshua Gamson, Todd Gitlin, Pepper Schwartz, and Alan Wolfe—to respond to the following passages from Pierre Bourdieu's *On Television* (New York, New Press, 1999 [translated by Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson]):

I don't think you can refuse categorically to talk on television. In certain cases, there can even be something of a duty to do so, again under the right conditions. In making this choice, one must take into account the specificities of television. With television, we are dealing with an instrument that offers, theoretically, the possibility of reaching everybody. This brings up a number of questions. Is what I have to say meant to reach everybody? Am I ready to make what I say understandable by everybody? Is it worth being understood by everybody? You can go even further: should it be understood by everybody? (pp. 14-15)

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## Editor's Note

With this issue, we hope to generate dialogue that will "spill over" into the forum established on the section's website--<http://www.ibiblio.org/culture/forum>.

As always, please let me know your ideas for submissions!

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Volume 19, No. 1 (Autumn 2004)

## Lombardi Meets Balanchine: The Sociologies of Culture and Sport

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In 1983, Pierre Bourdieu addressed the Eighth International Symposium of the International Committee on the Sociology of Sport in Paris. This brief address, entitled "Program for a Sociology of Sport," was subsequently reprinted in both *Sociology of Sport Journal* (1988) and in *In Other Words* (1990). Bourdieu began his address with the observation that sociologists of sport are "doubly dominated" inasmuch as they are "scorned by sociologists" and "despised by sportspersons." Although this assessment may seem a bit harsh two decades later, there can be little doubt that the sociology of sport still occupies a marginal position within the field of sociology. One indication of this marginality is the fact that only two articles dealing directly with sport (Leifer 1990; 1995) have appeared in *American Sociological Review*, *American Journal of Sociology*, or *Social Forces* in the past fifteen years. Three other  
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## How Relational Methods Matter: A Reply to Perrin\*

*John Sonnett and Ronald Breiger*

*University of Arizona*

Andrew Perrin (2004) argues that we should "privilege standard techniques of quantitative sociology—generally, linear regression and its cousins—in our quest to evaluate and demonstrate culture's empirical role." He claims that the methodological innovations of Martin, Mische, Bearman, Mohr, and Breiger are detrimental in achieving this purpose, because they might "marginalize cultural analysis from the rest of sociology."

Our position is that sociologists should use appropriate methods, whether narrative, essay, cultural-studies, feminist, critical, relational, or those more conventionally discussed under the rubrics of qualitative and/or quantitative, in pursuit of ideas, hypotheses and vision that have as much breadth and

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On the one hand, [television] lowers the “entry fee” in a certain number of fields— philosophical, juridical, and so on. It can designate [as] a sociologist, writer, or philosopher people who haven’t paid their dues from the viewpoint of the internal definition of the profession. On the other hand, television has the capacity to reach the greatest number of individuals. What I find difficult to justify is the fact that the extension of the audience is used to legitimate the lowering of the standards for entry into the field. People may object to this as elitism, a simple defense of the besieged citadel of big science and high culture, or even, an attempt to close out ordinary people... In fact, I am defending the conditions necessary for the production and diffusion of the highest human creations. To escape the twin traps of elitism or demagoguery we must work to maintain, even to raise the requirements for the right to entry—the entry fee— into the fields of production. (p. 65)

As should be apparent, my purpose was to provoke a cultural turn in the conversation about public sociology, and in particular, about public sociologists in the media, and I am grateful to Wolfe, Schwartz, Gitlin, Gamson, and Epstein for accepting that challenge. In their brief essays, they address directly Bourdieu’s concerns about when and whether to appear on television and about the credentialing of public intellectuals. Their essays carry forward as well, lines of discussion within the sociology of culture about national differences in fields of cultural production; the conventionality of power; the capacity of actors to transform spaces of public discourse and memory; cultural logics in political action; instabilities in the social maintenance of boundaries; and the democratization of culture.

Still other strands of the discussion remain to be threaded. I wonder, for example, what Habermasians make of

the conditions of public discourse in the television venues that these five authors describe. Do the television programs substitute, at least symbolically, for the coffee houses Habermas described, and public intellectuals for the politically engaged citizens who frequented such places? If so, arguably the “entry fee” *ought* to be low.

I wonder as well what Goffmanian frame analysis could bring to this conversation. From my own experience and discussions with colleagues, I suspect that the lack of influence that guests have on the framing of issues on television programs is particularly troubling for scholars. When we teach, we write our own syllabi and lead the classroom discussions. When we conduct research, we tend to direct that activity as well. To be sure, we may fine-tune our choice of readings to better appeal to nineteen-year-olds, and if we want a journal to accept our paper, we are well advised to situate our arguments within the discursive space the journal’s editors and reviewers have created.

To a great extent, however, it is we ourselves who frame and structure the discussions in our classrooms and written work. On television, by contrast, the power to frame and direct the discussion lies with the program’s producers and presenters. How does that fact bear on Bourdieu’s observations? If a program’s framing of guests’ qualifications and the issues they are invited to address tends to preclude reasoned discussion (as witness, for example, “The O’Reilly Factor” on the Fox News Network), might those be sufficient grounds to “refuse categorically” to appear on the program?

I hope that members of the section will join me in discussing these and other topics that the following five essays elicit. To find the discussion groups, visit CultureWeb Forum at <http://www.ibiblio.org/culture/forum/>.

## Cynthia Fuchs Epstein, City University of New York

Pierre Bourdieu’s opening comment is so quintessentially a product of French cultural life. In France, where Bernard Pivot, the TV host of the wildly popular “Apostrophe” and then “Bouillon de Culture” programs, posed informed questions to six or eight leading intellectuals about high culture matters of literature, art and music or philosophy and theory, there may actually be a dilemma for the sociologist to consider. There, whether he or she ought to talk up to or down to an audience or whether to talk at all might be real questions. The situation in the United States is another matter. It is a novelty to read that Jacques Chirac—in a gesture offered to repair Franco-American relations— revealed (publicly) to George W. Bush that he enjoys junk food. But we really do know that his preferences probably run more to *cassoulet au porc* rather than pork rinds. So it may be with television. The French have their share of junk on TV, but the high culture program is not an anomaly as it is here. But for many years most television sets in France were tuned to Pivot’s intellectual discussions every Friday evening at nine—prime time. In our land where the intellectual—the academic—is regarded derisively as an “egg-head from an ivory tower,” who is asking the sociologist to

confront the question: “can you refuse categorically to talk on television”?

Of course, it is seductive for the academic to be asked to speak (or act) on television at all, anywhere, Bourdieu, in the statement chosen by Barry Glassner, doesn’t address the widely differing formats for television discussions in the U.S. and in France. One doesn’t simply “go on TV.” One is invited to participate in a news segment; or, if very lucky, in a thoughtful long interview (a la Bill Moyers) in a book interview on a cable channel. Conceivable but rare, the sociologist could become a talking head. Each setting provides a different context and evokes a different audience.

Unlike communication with the public through articles or books, television usually involves constant interaction. The “guest” faces controls. The host or interviewer (or the production people if the program is taped) can intervene and guide the presentation—editing as it proceeds. The communication is mediated. So, the unknown question for the guest is whether and how the persons who frame the discussion are informed. Do these media “personalities” understand the sociologist’s premises? Do they care about the guest’s quality of scholarship? Do they have intellectual or political agendas? What is

their viewpoint? Do they think their “common sense” makes them equal partners in drawing conclusions? Does the person have any idea what the sociologist is known for? Is the agenda stacked?

The most widely seen television shows on which a sociologist might be asked to appear are usually those that are most segmented; and in which the “expert” is asked to be direct and state an observation or opinion in a succinct and focused way. This creates a serious problem for the scholar used, as she or he is, to seeing various sides of an issue or to speak with parenthetical phrases. Subtlety and tempered consideration are likely to get one interrupted by the host or scissored out in the editing phase.

Some years ago I participated in a TV program with Betty Friedan on the guidelines then being set for interpretation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, barring discrimination on the basis of sex. Her performance was instructive to a TV neophyte. The interviewer thought that some jobs were naturally suitable for women or men, and posed questions geared to that point of view. Friedan ignored the questions of the interviewer and just stated what she had in mind. It was a good lesson and one more fitting to Bourdieu’s notion of the obligation of a public intellectual to get his or her message out. But one can’t do that without a certain level of fame and the attendant power it bestows. Political candidates are good at staying on message no matter what the question.

Women’s movement issues easily meet the standards invoked by Bourdieu. Probably most questions are easily transmitted to the public, especially those dealing with social problem-oriented research. What are issues too difficult to write about in understandable terms? We might engage in some professional self-reflection. Perhaps too many scholars have prospered because their ideas are posed in obscure language (we can’t understand it, so it must be deep!). These are not likely candidates for television. Paradoxically, some of these scholars are writing about the impact of the media in language the media would never present!

Perhaps today the sociologist has no choice but to consider communicating with the public through television. Who reads magazines (including small journals) anymore? Even very few sociologists even read the academic literature (partly because it is too technical, filled with equations and statistical analysis). Shelves are filled with unread journals whose obscure language and even more obscure presentations of data repel the interested but non-specialized reader.

## Joshua Gamson, University of San Francisco

Bourdieu makes two good points about talking on television as a scholar: first, that the decision whether or not to do so should be made very carefully, and on a case-by-case basis, and with one’s eyes wide open to the constricting realities of television; second, that television tends to make nearly everyone an expert, regardless of whether or not they have earned the designation in the eyes of their own profession, and that this is not such a good thing.

The first point ought to be common sense. The reasons to take your ideas and research to television’s broad public are compelling. If your ideas or findings might make a differ-

In the real world it is the easy answer, the observation that fits in with popular wisdom, that is most reported in the print media and then picked up by the visual media. There is little quality control. To take one example: those who brought us the focus on left brain and right brain specialization, or the presumed different performances of boys and girls, have captured the eyes and minds of newspaper editors and made their way to television news. That the studies are based on tiny or unrepresentative samples is not a worry. Researchers whose work supports conventional wisdom are often lionized. (Consider John Grey’s pseudo sociological best seller, *Men are from Mars; Women are from Venus!*) Here is where the visual and print media deviate from their practice on political reporting, which is to present “both” sides of an issue. The refutations of studies showing differences, for example, rarely get reported, and if they do, it is certainly buried in text or kissed off with a passing nod. Whereas in political reporting a talking head on each side is interviewed on such questions as whether Afghan prisoners should be given the right to lawyers, the scholars who argue on different “sides” of the debate on the benefit or harm from placing children in day care is not.

Perhaps the most important question for our profession is who should speak in the media for Sociology?

Selection of authorities is quite haphazard. Some scholars are promoted by their agents or their university public relations offices; some have personal connections to writers and editors and network executives. Some are physically attractive and have learned to speak well in media terms. But their opinions are not vetted in the same way as their written work. There are no referees sifting the expertise and considering whether their messages are worthy of dissemination. And further—as one sees from sociology sections of chain bookstores, some very stupid writing is published and promoted under the name “sociology.”

There is, of course, a tension between vetted and authoritative knowledge and consideration of new, innovative and interesting but untested ideas that the profession and the public ought to know about. How do we create monitors for this, and should we?

Perhaps television and the other media using the knowledge sociologists provide ought to have some rating system. It might be “T” (tested), “TR” (not sure, probably trash); “PI” (Possibly innovative). And who will be on the committee? A section of the National Academy of Sciences, a select committee of the American Sociological Association, or shall we leave it to Oprah?

ence in the lives of those beyond you and a few colleagues, it behooves you to try to speak about them on television, simply because so many of the people you’re trying to reach watch it. The reasons to avoid television appearances are also undeniable. Television is often a difficult and distasteful place to present serious findings or ideas: we don’t control the television discourse, and those who do tend to have an interest in something quite different from, say, “truth” or “knowledge” or even “good conversation.” The television version of your ideas often turns out to be so deformed that, while it is clear that *something* has reached a big audience, it is also clear that *what*

reached them was not your ideas—in which case, there was not much point going on television.

That the conditions for speaking intelligently and deeply are not great on television, or that you have to speak differently for a television audience than for another one, are not reason enough on their own to avoid television. (The conditions for speaking clearly and passionately are arguably quite poor in most academic journals, but few people in the academy dismiss journal publishing altogether on those grounds.) Bourdieu is right to suggest that, rather than any hard and fast rule—you are duty-bound to disseminate your ideas on television, or duty-bound to protect your ideas from the ravages of television—one ought to consider a television appearance by evaluating the match between one's knowledge or ideas, one's communication skills, the medium, and the audience. Certain rules of thumb seem obvious, if underutilized. If what you have to say is relevant to a lot of people and can be made comprehensible by you to a large audience without too much warping, then you should be on TV. If what you have to say isn't really something lots of people need to hear about, then don't bother with television; go talk to the people to whom your ideas matter. If what you have to say is too hard to transmit within the rules of television, try another medium. If it turns out that what television people want you to say is a betrayal of your ideas and findings, get up and leave, or talk in such gibberish that no one will care what you're saying.

Bourdieu's second point also seems apt: television indeed lowers the "standards for entry into the field," in that people who don't have much training can hold forth on television in much the same way as people with years of training, especially when it comes to anything sociological. What interests me, though, is that so many people who *have* thought hard and studied a topic for years go on television when they should not. Too few people, it seems to me, ask themselves the kind of questions Bourdieu recommends—about the importance, relevance, and comprehensibility their own work—before going on television. Something like vanity has brought not a few scholars, including me, into the studio when they should probably just have stayed home. Maybe one of the profession's gatekeeping responsibilities should include holding its members accountable for not-asking the questions

### Todd Gitlin, Columbia University

In the era of the publicity intellectual—Michael Bérubé's felicitous phrase [<http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?pagename=article&node=&contentId=A26273-2002Jul4&notFound=t>], caution is especially required. You can cheapen your own currency by appearing so often—so promiscuously, shall we say—you become branded as unserious. Possibly deservedly.

On the other hand, a strategic use of television is not to be foregone lightly. I agree with Bourdieu that categorical refusal is a foolish policy. It entails foregoing the possibility of entering, however faintly, however momentarily, into the public discourse, however degraded it may be today. Sometimes you can avail yourself of an opportunity to lend expertise to a discussion. Sometimes—via expertise or various rhetorical arts—you acquire a modicum of framing power by virtue of making your talking head available. Since so much of pundit

Bourdieu raises; maybe the asking of such questions should be part of every graduate student's training.

Why isn't the habit of asking such questions about a TV appearance better entrenched among us? One reason may be that so many people consider television categorically below them, and therefore consider a TV appearance a bad idea by definition. Over the last generation or two, this tendency has become less pronounced. Another reason may be that academics are not immune to the seductions of television, which flatters and certifies and validates those invited to appear on it, offering the attention of millions of eyes and an inflated sense of one's own importance. Most interesting to consider, though, is that serious question-asking is not a habit because the answers can be so discomfiting and deflating. For instance, although you think of your work as socially significant, careful evaluation might reveal that what you have to say is not of interest to nearly as many people as you had thought; or, although you are a teacher, you might discover that you cannot effectively communicate your ideas or findings to a large, diverse group of people; or, although you are known to yourself and others as a complex thinker, you might find that your ideas and findings are actually simple enough to be boiled down for television; or, although you think of yourself as interested in democratic discourse, you might discover that you are, at heart, more interested in having a narrow conversation with an intellectual elite.

Such discoveries could be clarifying and liberating. One of the best reasons to consider speaking on television, I think, is not the decision itself—in the end, it doesn't matter *that* much—but the decision process. It might inspire you to work on clarity of communication, or to happily engage in narrower conversations without the veneer of public concern; it might inspire you to more honestly present the modest significance of your work, to honor and celebrate its simplicity, or to search out complexity when you thought it was already there. Ironically, serious consideration of an appearance on television could lead to greater intellectual clarity and honesty. Clarity and honesty may be of only vague interest to television, but they never once did the academy any harm.

discourse is raucous and ignorant, such possibilities should not be sneered at.

But the would-be framer can also be framed (in both senses). The danger of being framed is especially severe when the piece is edited. Live television is hard enough to keep from fracturing your communication, but at least when the program is live you can force yourself to remain—loathsome phrase—"on message." Tape or film, however, create the possibility, even the likelihood, that your golden or at least stainless little oration will get melted down to a tinny sound bite that ends up nothing but a usable chunk of a journalist's piece—that is, a piece framed in a manner that defies your best intentions. In the era of the nine-second sound bite, you may even find a phrase of yours extracted from its sentence and made to illustrate some argument quite contrary to your desires. Another possible embarrassment: the journalist's (that is, in the end,

the news organization's) choice is the most banal phrase you've uttered.

My own policy for some thirteen years now has been to refuse to be interviewed on film or tape for network news. I told the horror story of the warping of an extensive NBC News interview I did in 1991 by the correspondent Bob Dotson in my book *Media Unlimited: How the Torrent of Images and Sounds*

### Pepper Schwartz, University of Washington

Television is both the producer and product of culture. Much of the production, however, comes straight out of Hollywood, where ten year olds spout world weary witticisms more likely to be heard in real life from the mouths of forty year old bon vivants. Talk shows like "Crossfire" ratchet up the discourse of politicians into shrill exchanges worthy of Jerry Springer to help us stay interested within our newly delimited 20 second attention spans. "Reality" shows feed our curiosity about backstage greed, lust, and cupidity and also help create us into a nation of voyeurs who now discuss the adventures of the Bachelor rather than our own.

It's no wonder that academics shift uneasily at the suggestion that it's high time to join the fray—nay, to consider it a duty to appear on television—and yet, and I agree with the Bodrieu, most of us should. Why? Because it is hard to influence public knowledge or opinion when your contribution is unread or drowned out by other, more accessible voices. Television has almost totally taken over from the print media (only about 17% of people read newspapers anymore), and while the Internet is gaining its own set of obsessives, it is far from claiming the four-plus hours a day that defines your average TV watchers.

But TV does not get "everyone". Not any more. The networks are losing market share quicker than you can say Cable Channel number 967, and "everyone" is getting harder and harder to get. Now that we have the Golf Channel, and other niche programming, it is hard to know where to find "everyone" any more—except when there is a national or international disaster, or the final segment of "Frasier." Just like the way we go to the new food courts, where we can get our main dish from one purveyor and our desert and drinks from another, modern audiences get their knowledge a la carte.

What does this mean for those of us who recognize the power of television and want to substitute some research-based insights and data for the haphazard collection of opinion and "expertise" that usually shows up there?

The good news is that it means that the iron-fisted control of network culture is unraveling; the bad news is that since TV is increasingly ghettoized, the best we can do is to travel from ghetto to ghetto, and some of those destinations, take for example Oxygen, have about six people in their village. We will need a series of situated conversations based on channel demographics, time slot, etc. Even format will have to vary, since some discussions will only originate, and disseminate, on the Internet—and so blogs, bulletin boards,

### Alan Wolfe, Boston College

Of course no intellectual, and certainly no public intellectual, can "categorically refuse" to appear on television. Intellectuals, in fact, should refuse to do anything categorically, so

*Culture*

*Overwhelms Our Lives*, and won't repeat it here. Suffice to say that I have no regret I climbed onto this particular wagon. I can recall falling off only once since, and that was when I knew I had prepared a straight-up sound bite that I could control and thought it might be useful to send out into the world.

A dangerous game. Go into it, if at all, with your eyes wide open.

and "communities" will have to be read, understood and cultivated.

Is this the democratization of culture—the creation of small towns in a big world? Yes. Is this the loss of democracy—the loss of the ability to be heard in a big way, to true effect to "everyone"? Yes. Both trends seem to be happening at the same time—confusing those of us who accepted the hegemony of television a long time ago—and who can no longer find intellectual traction in its space.

So, to me, the issue is not whether or not we should use television or whether or not the gatekeepers will keep out quality experts but rather, how do you get what the advertising world would call "stickiness"? In other words, how do you say anything that gets remembered and remembered by enough people to matter?

I don't have easy answers. But it will require mass media. And it will also require a regular commitment to appearing on mass media. Figure also on twenty years before your voice has a chance of being the one that people search out and use as a guide. As for standards for who gets to participate? Pulesse! Even the most serious political shows—like "Face the Nation" or "Hard Ball"—want experts with intensity, deeply defended opinions (don't you dare ever say, "On the one hand..."), and a snappy pace. These shows have weekly, or daily, deadlines—and if their first call doesn't net the kind of expert they need, they will keep going until they are mikeing up Donald Trump to talk about Integrity in Business. . . or whoever.

Today's TV is a hurry up and entertain me affair. It is also deeply political. If you want to partake of it to change a cultural vision, or to create one, you may have to buy yourself a network (like Al Gore and Joel Hyatt) in order to get around the gatekeepers who decide, for example, how many hundreds of hours is given to sacralize Ronald Regan during the week of his death. At the very least, you will have to talk to anyone and everyone so that you can become one of the ten people who are summoned from producer's rolodexes. If you don't, then content yourself with chiming in on relevant topics occasionally and trying to sell your book on the "Today Show." Being effective on television requires a commitment to television. Graduate education denigrates even the thought of such a déclassé location for academic pearls. But unless we want to stay irrelevant to national dialogues and the production of opinion, that should change.

long, of course, as they do not do so categorically. We should be flattered that the media folk want to hear from us.

Bourdieu's positions on these matters are not helpful in regard: there is television and there is television. In France there are far fewer channels than there are in America; here the question is not whether intellectuals should appear on television but what kinds of programs offer the most appropriate venues. I've been on both the "O'Reilly Factor" and the "News Hour" and one has almost nothing to do with the other. Public intellectuals ought to feel obligated to speak on public television if invited, since one is allowed to express at least some nuance. But no one should feel obligated to appear on slash-and-burn cable stations if doing so makes them uncomfortable. What passes for debate on most cable tv talk shows requires a zest for combat, and if you don't have it — I don't think I have much of it — you shouldn't do it. Fortunately, O'Reilly treated me as more of an academic expert on the subject under discussion — the "under God" clause in the Pledge of Allegiance — and not as an advocate for one position or the other, which meant that I never had to deal with his disdain. (He probably never knew that I see no problem keeping the words in the Pledge).

I have no idea what Bourdieu is talking about when he discusses those who have not paid their dues. Academics generally establish their entry fees to keep out other academics, not to protect their expertise. The training required in most

academic disciplines in the social sciences certify that one is competent to teach other academics; such training has little or nothing to do with whether a person has anything valuable to say to the general public. Writing op-eds for the *New York Times* or review essays for *The New Republic* not only requires intense concentration, it also means facing very demanding editors. The entry fees required to be a public intellectual are as rigorous, if not more so, than those established by disciplinary guilds.

The toughest standards of all are, or at least ought to be, those that intellectuals and academics establish for themselves. Bourdieu writes as if academics or public intellectuals have a gift they ought to consider sharing via television to the public. On the contrary: earning to discipline one's thoughts in the clearest possible way so that large numbers of people may understand them is a gift that radio and television offers to us. When I go on television to discuss gay marriage or the Reagan legacy — the subjects of my last two appearances — I am there not to debate someone else so much as I am there to debate myself. The discipline required to compress and explain one's thoughts is the best method I have yet discovered for making up my own mind on issues that have no easy black-and-white answers.

### Lombardi Meets Balanchine, continued

articles in these journals during this period have examined sport, but only as a strategic research site to study such diverse issues as organizational ecology, racism, and suicide. The paucity of articles on sport in major sociological journals in the United States is surprising since major sociological journals elsewhere have been more receptive to the study of sport. In Britain, during this same time period, over a dozen articles on various aspects of sport have appeared in *British Journal of Sociology*, *Sociology*, and *Sociological Review*.

Due at least in part to the reluctance of mainstream sociological journals in the United States to publish their research, sociologists of sport have established their own journals. Much of the research on the sociology of sport is published in *Sociology of Sport Journal*, the journal of the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport, and *International Review of the Sociology of Sport*, the journal of the International Sociology of Sport Association. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, associated with the Center for the Study of Sport in Society at Northeastern University, has a somewhat more eclectic mandate but also publishes many sociological analyses. *Sport in Society*, formerly published as *Culture, Sport, Society*, is a relatively new journal in the field. All of these journals are truly international inasmuch as they publish articles by sociologists from all over the world. Indeed, as the editorial boards of these journals attest, the sociology of sport is one of the few areas in sociology that is not dominated by Americans.

In view of its marginal position within the discipline, it is not surprising that sociologists of culture have generally neglected the sociology of sports. A notable exception, not surprisingly, is Wacquant (1995; 1998), who worked with Bourdieu.

However, given the early interest in sport exhibited by Bourdieu, who is generally acknowledged as one of the modern founders of the sociology of culture, the neglect of sport by other sociologists of culture is curious. For Bourdieu, the similarities between the field of sport and the field of culture were obvious. As he puts it (1988: 155), "sporting consumptions — if one wants to call them such — cannot be studied independently of food consumptions, or leisure consumptions more generally." Indeed, Bourdieu explicitly asserts that the two fields are homologous. For example, he proposes a parallel between development of professional sport and development of professional dance (1988). Both fields were transformed by creation of a distinction between "professionals" and "spectators." It is in this sense that a legendary football coach and a celebrated choreographer can be viewed as counterparts in homologous fields of cultural production.

Unfortunately, it is easy for sociologists of culture, even those who are interested in popular culture, to overlook the work of sociologists of sport. Since articles dealing with sport are typically published in specialty journals, rather than in the major journals of discipline, they are not readily accessible or visible to other sociologists. Similarly, because they do not often publish in major journals, very few sociologists of sport are employed in major graduate departments. By comparison, the sociology of culture occupies a much more central position within the larger field of sociology. Many of the leading sociologists of culture publish regularly in major sociological journals and are employed in major graduate departments. As a result of these disparities, sociologists of sport are generally aware of recent work in the sociology of culture, while sociologists of culture remain largely ignorant of recent work in

the sociology of sport. This situation is lamentable because, due largely to the work of Bourdieu (Clement 1995), the sociology of sport has experienced its own "cultural turn." In fact, the sociology of sport has increasingly come under the influence of cultural studies (Andrews 2002).

A cursory survey of the articles published in just the last two years by sociologists of sport reveals that many of them examine theoretical issues that are clearly relevant to the sociology of culture. Cashmore and Parker (2003) and Chung (2003) analyze the cultural meanings constructed from media representations of sports celebrities. Phillips and Hutchins (2003) and Bernstein and Blain (2002) study the commodification of sports by media corporations. Tuck (2003), Juffers (2002), McCarthy, Jones, and Patroc (2002) examine the media representations of ethnicity in professional sports. Giulianotti (2002) and Crawford (2003) study the relationship between sports teams and their fans. Hogan (2003), Rowe (2003), Van Bottemberg (2003), and Wong and Trumper (2002) analyze the relationship between sports and national identity. Finally, Atkinson (2002) studies the intersecting logics of sports and entertainment. These examples are not meant to imply that all of the research in the sociology of sport is relevant to sociologists of culture. Still, sport can be viewed as a field of cultural production. As such, it promises to be a fertile field for sociologists of culture. As Frey and Eitzen (1991: 504) note, "no other institution, except perhaps religion, commands the mystique, the nostalgia, the romantic ideational fixation that sport does."

Even if there were no theoretical common ground between the sociology of culture and the sociology of sport, there are many substantive reasons for sociologists of culture to study sport. Sport is a major aspect of popular culture in the United States and elsewhere. Last year, the paid attendance at Major League Baseball, National Football League, National Basketball Association, and National Hockey League games exceeded 125 million. Tickets sales alone generated just over \$4 billion in revenue for these leagues. Although it is difficult to estimate the aggregate television audience for these four leagues, the revenue from their television contracts with the four major commercial television networks totaled \$3.5 billion last year alone. In that same year, Americans spent an additional \$6.7 billion on products licensed by these four leagues. Several other professional sports, ranging from golf to stock car racing, have comparable fan bases. As a result, coverage of sporting events and discourse about sports, both amateur and professional, permeate the mass media. ESPN and ESPN2, which are devoted entirely to sports coverage, are among the highest-rated channels on cable television. According to the Newspaper Association of America, almost one-quarter of all the "story space" in the typical American newspaper is devoted to sports coverage, more than any other category of news.

As a result of the media coverage devoted sports, some sports figures attain celebrity status and become, in effect, cultural role models (Lines 2001). Sports stars are typically able to capitalize on their celebrity status by becoming commercial spokespersons for various products and services. Thirty years ago, Joe DiMaggio became a spokesperson for a new product that automatically brewed coffee. He soon became as famous as "Mr. Coffee" as he was as "The Yankee Clipper."

*Culture*

The first sports star to realize the full potential of commercial endorsements was Michael Jordan. Even in retirement, he earns \$35 million a year from endorsements. However, the current endorsements champion is Tiger Woods, who receives \$70 million a year to endorse products ranging from cars to clothes. Although these sports "heroes" may not always exemplify core cultural values (Birrell 1981), they still function as cultural role models to the extent that they influence the consumption patterns of their fans. Soon after their introduction in 1984, Nike Air Jordan basketball shoes became the footwear of choice among teenage boys across America. More recently, Tiger Woods created a new fashion trend among men when he began wearing Nike mock turtleneck sweaters on tour.

It is impossible to suggest all of the ways in which sociologists of culture might engage sports and, by implication, the sociology of sport. However, as noted earlier, some important issues have already begun to attract attention from sociologists of sport. Certainly, sociologists of culture might study the relationship between fans, teams, and sports. There are, of course, class differences in the extent to which individuals engage in different sports either as participants or spectators. However, even among spectators, there are different degrees of engagement that are determined, to some extent, by the cultural codes possessed by those spectators. Cultural sociologists might also examine the consequences of the commodification of both amateur and professional sports by media corporations. Ironically, some of the deleterious effects of this process are most readily apparent at the level of collegiate sports. In addition, cultural sociologists might investigate the process by which selected athletes are elevated to the status of cultural icons and the relationship between these iconic athletes, their fans, and the larger society. Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods have earned millions of dollars from commercial endorsements but, as a consequence, they have forfeited the opportunity to achieve the stature of either Jackie Robinson or Muhammad Ali as advocates for social justice. Finally, cultural sociologists might examine the relationship between sports and national identity and study how this relationship is being transformed by the increased globalization of these sports. In one of the stranger cultural legacies of British colonialism, a recent series of cricket matches between India and Pakistan is widely seen as an important step toward the establishment of peaceful relations between these two nations.

Despite the obvious conjunctures between these two areas of sociology, it is unlikely that sociologists of culture will immediately embrace the study of sport. Any such engagement will require them to overcome certain biases. Bourdieu recognized that the disdain that most sociologists harbored toward the sociology of sport was not based solely on sociological considerations. As a rugby player in his youth, he understood full well the scorn that many intellectuals have for athletes, particularly those engaged in contact sports (Bourdieu 1978). This bias is compounded by another that is unique to many sociologists of culture. From its inception, the sociology of culture established itself as a legitimate specialty area within sociology by focusing primarily on the production and appropriation of art and music. In short, the sociology of culture as a field gained almost immediate cultural legitimacy because it studied the field of legitimate culture. To borrow a phrase from Bourdieu, it was a case of "legitimation by conta-

gion." Having established its own legitimacy, the boundaries of the field have slowly expanded to include a broader range of cultural products and practices, including most forms of popular culture. Despite the opportunities associated with such a move, it may take some time before the intellectual boundaries of the sociology of culture are expanded sufficiently to include the cultural aspects of sport.

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## How Relational Methods Matter, continued

excitement as their authors can generate. We are admirers of Andrew Perrin's research. We would join him in encouraging cultural sociologists to consider using standard quantitative methods in many situations. A view less parochial than Perrin's, an essay encouraging the use of more relational, less-standard formal methods for cultural analysis, has been argued with such sparkle and verve by John Mohr in a recent issue of

this newsletter (Mohr, 2003) that we considered just letting the matter rest. But Perrin raises a number of concerns worthy of further consideration, and we'd like to join in.

It is true that regression methods are institutionalized in quantitative sociology, as Perrin points out. Therefore using these methods may help studies by cultural sociologists get past professional gatekeepers, and perhaps communicate to

a wider sociological audience. Also, regression methods are best suited for empirical modeling when theoretical questions take the form of “Does X --> Y?”, as they often do in quantitative sociology. Both of these aspects make regression a useful device for communicating cultural sociology.

The form of questioning required by regression models however is not the only way of looking at how culture matters. To the extent that cultural processes are about meaning, this suggests that discursive and semiotic processes are at work. Ever since Saussure, such processes have been usefully understood on the basis of a wide variety of relational models. We would not want to discourage those sociologists of culture who embrace the relationality on which interpretations build. The use of relational methods does not require researchers to “confuse empirical reality with its schematic representation” (as Perrin charges), but instead to attempt a closer resemblance between empirical models and theoretical understandings. Moreover, if cultural sociology is to have wider influence in the discipline, it must offer something that the discipline does not already have. Demonstrating that cultural variables can affect non-cultural outcomes is one kind of contribution, but it is not the only “value-added” of cultural sociology.

A broader contribution of cultural sociology is to emphasize the interweaving of so-called cultural and non-cultural conditions. Qualitative and ethnographic work excels at this, demonstrating the rich contexts within which cultural action takes place and emphasizing combinations of factors and the embeddedness of cultural action. If causal arguments are made, these often articulate with some form of field theory—a holistic approach to causal interpretation which explicitly rejects the Newtonian logic of regression’s  $X \rightarrow Y$ . John Levi Martin’s (2003) 50-page inquiry into field theory substantially expands on these points. And the appearance of that essay as the lead article in vol. 109 of *AJS* suggests that the mainstream is perhaps less conservative than Perrin in its willingness to consider the value of relational approaches to cultural studies. It would be highly ironic indeed if, just when mainstream research in economic sociology (Ruef, 2000) and organizations (Lounsbury and Ventresca, 2002) and, yes, culture (Anheier et al., 1995; Giuffre, 1999) is exhibiting increased interest in relational approaches to culture, sociologists of culture themselves were to erect a principled opposition to relationism—an opposition that we believe is misguided, and based on little more than a fear of not being standard.

Relational methods attempt to capture some of the contextual richness of more qualitative approaches through their configurational and network-oriented frameworks. Martin’s (2002) study of constraints on belief, Mische and Pattison’s (2000) study of the joint construction of organizational actors, protest events, and movement projects within a civic arena, and Breiger and Mohr’s (2004) analysis of discourse roles in a post-affirmative action university climate cannot easily be reduced to a Newtonian causal argument. Rather it is the configuration of relations among actors, actions, and ideas changing over time that is emphasized.

Configurational logic is the key to these kinds of approaches, and metric scaling and lattices are only some of the ways this can be approached. Qualitative Comparative Analysis (Ragin, 2000) for example, is a formal and systematic method that incorporates the logic of case-based qualitative

work. In this logic, empirical cases are described by the complex configurations of conditions describing them, so that the linear logic of  $X \rightarrow Y$  is replaced with the configurational logic of  $X * Z * Q \rightarrow Y$ . This approach can help illuminate cultural topics, for example by showing how relations between musical genres and symbolic boundaries do not follow linear patterns (Sonnnett 2004).

Our objection to privileging regression methods, therefore, is explicitly not that they are just “shallow numbers” accompanied by an “antiseptic rhetoric,” although they are indeed sometimes just that (a point that statistician David Freedman illuminates for sociological methodologists; Freedman, 1991). Rather, the problem with privileging this framework is that it sometimes uses numbers, and theory, in ways that disconnect it from the bulk of “cultural sociology.” Assuming the independence of observations, as one must do in regression, explicitly does away with context, reducing it to the assumption of *ceteris paribus*. Perrin is right that hierarchical linear models can provide important insight into and analysis of cross-level cultural and social processes, and we applaud the use of HLM along with other multivariate techniques where such techniques are appropriate.

Sometimes, nonetheless, it is useful to conceptualize culture as “so entirely situated and context dependent” (as Perrin writes early in his essay) that techniques such as correspondence analysis (think of Bourdieu’s “fields”) become very useful. Moreover, we see the boundaries between “standard” methods and relational or fuzzy—we are tempted to say “funky”—techniques to be very slippery, and worthy of analysis. Who would have thought that the quantitative techniques of field theorist Pierre Bourdieu and those of rational-choice theorist James Coleman are so similar and intimately intertwined? This is precisely a point argued in Breiger (2000), along with an insistence that quantitative approaches themselves need to be understood as cultural manifestations.

In conclusion, it is not our intent to discredit or to throw over regression approaches to cultural sociology, but only to challenge the claim that they should be privileged over alternative approaches. Using regression methods may sometimes help cultural sociologists to provide superb analyses, and perhaps also to publish their work in places where more “non-cultural” sociologists can see it, although we suspect that this latter argument is becoming increasingly less valid. Privileging regression methods would be detrimental to the longer-term development of cultural sociology, because adhering to a hierarchy of privileged methods established *a priori* requires ignoring some of the more fundamental contributions that methodological frameworks, broadly construed, can make to understanding the complex interweavings of culture and social action.

Thanks to John Mohr for helpful comments on this essay.

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## Reply to Sonnett and Breiger

*Andrew J. Perrin, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

"All models are wrong, but some are useful." So wrote the eminent statistician George E. P. Box.

I am flattered by the attention and controversy my argument in *Culture* has generated. For the most part, I'd like to let my original piece and the critiques of it stand on their own and let the conversation migrate to the discussion forums of CultureWeb (<http://www.ibiblio.org/culture/forum>). Let me, though, make a few quick points:

1.) Sonnett and Breiger generously expressed their admiration for my work; I, too, am a great admirer of their work, as well as that of thinkers whose work I have critiqued (e.g., Mohr, Martin, Mische, Pattison). It is because of the theoretical and substantive brilliance of this line of work that the critique I am proposing is even possible.

2.) I am emphatically not proposing that regression and its analytical cousins be used to investigate theoretical puzzles for which they are inappropriate. Rather, I am arguing that many of the questions to which cultural sociology addresses itself actually *are* amenable to regression methods, and that in these

cases we should prefer regression over the invention or adaptation of more obscure approaches.

3.) Many of the concerns contained in Sonnett and Breiger's rejoinder seem essentially aesthetic in character—that is, they express a preference for "configurational" and "relational" methods *because of the method's representational elegance* instead of because of the theoretical puzzles to be solved. Indeed, another colleague wrote me privately that he avoids regression because it "looks like a line;" he prefers methods that "look like webs." Returning to Box's aphorism, the aesthetic criterion seems inappropriate. Many relational and configurational methods can be operationalized as measures which, in turn, can be included in regression models, thereby evaluating the relative importance of relational and "Newtonian" causal accounts. But it is a mistake to assume relational models are better causal descriptors simply because they are relational.

I look forward to a continuing productive discussion of these matters on CultureWeb.

## Announcements

### SPECIAL ISSUE, *THESIS ELEVEN*

*Thesis Eleven* has published a special issue examining the cultural sociology of the section's Chair-Elect. The issue, entitled "The Alexander Effect: Sociology After Culture," is vol. 79, no. 1 (November 2004). Its table of contents is available online, at--

[www.sagepub.com](http://www.sagepub.com), link to "Journals."

### CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

*Symbolic Interaction* announces a call for papers for a special issue on recent research on popular music and everyday life. The deadline for submissions is January 1, 2005. The special issue editor:

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## 2004 Section Award Winners

**Best Book Award (tie):** Annette Lareau, Temple University, for *Unequal Childhoods: class, race and family life*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003; Laura Grindstaff, University of California, Davis, for *The Money Shot: Trash, Class and the Making of TV Talk Shows*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

**Best Article Award (tie):** Jeffrey C. Alexander, Yale University, for "On the Social Construction of Moral Universals: The 'Holocaust' from War Crime to Trauma Drama," *The European Journal of Sociology*; Patricia Ewick, Clark University, and Susan S. Silbey, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, for "Narrating Social Structure: Stories of Resistance to Legal Authority," *The American Journal of Sociology*.

**Best Student Paper Award:** Virag Molnar, Princeton University, for "Cultural Politics and Modernist Architecture: The Tulip Debate in Post-War Hungary."

## Call for Nominations for 2005 Section Awards

**Best Book:** Section members, authors, or publishers may nominate books published in 2003-2005. Self-nominations are welcome. Send a nominating letter, including a description of the book and its significance, as well as a copy of the book, to each member of the prize committee: Mitchell L. Stevens (chair), Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, Steinhardt School of Education, New York University, 246 Greene Street, 3rd Floor, New York NY 10003-6677 (mitchell.stevens@nyu.edu); Lyn Spillman, Department of Sociology, 810 Flanner Hall, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame IN 46556-1253 (lspillma@nd.edu); Sharon Zukin, Department of Sociology, City University Graduate Center, 365 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10016 (SZukin@gc.cuny.edu). The deadline for nominations is March 1, 2005.

**Best Article:** Works published in 2002-2004 are eligible. Authors can submit their own work or nominations may be made by others. Send a copy of the article electronically to each member of the prize committee: Mary Blair-Loy (chair), Department of Sociology, University of California San Diego ([blair-loy@ucsd.edu](mailto:blair-loy@ucsd.edu)); Ronald Eyerman, Department of Sociology, Yale University ([ronald.eyerman@yale.edu](mailto:ronald.eyerman@yale.edu)); and Abigail C. Saguy, Department of Sociology, UCLA, 264 Haines Hall, Los Angeles CA 90095-1551 (saguy@soc.ucla.edu). The deadline for nominations is March 1, 2005.

**Best Student Paper:** Any work (published or unpublished but not previously submitted for this prize) by someone who is a student at the time of the submission is eligible. Authors can submit their own work or nominations can be made by others. This award includes a \$300 prize to reimburse part of the cost of attending the 2005 ASA annual meeting. Send a copy of the paper electronically to each member of the prize committee: Neil Gross (chair), Department of Sociology, Harvard University ([ngross@wjh.harvard.edu](mailto:ngross@wjh.harvard.edu)); Lynn Chancer, Department of Sociology, Fordham University ([chancer@fordham.edu](mailto:chancer@fordham.edu)); Alford Young, Department of Sociology, University of Michigan (ayoun@umich.edu). The deadline for nominations is March 1, 2005.

The three awards will be announced at the 2005 ASA annual meeting. Winners will be notified in advance.

## Call for Papers--2005 ASA Open Culture Section Sessions Moving Towards "Performance"

*Chair-Elect Jeffrey Alexander ([Jeffrey.Alexander@yale.edu](mailto:Jeffrey.Alexander@yale.edu))*

Agency/structure, meaning/situation are two of the central presuppositional strains in social thought, and they have, of course, deeply marked sociological discourse in recent decades. These have naturally also oriented the field of cultural sociology, which has been pulled between more textually oriented, structural approaches to studying meaning and more situationally oriented, pragmatic ones. If I wished to greatly oversimplify, I could construct a narrative in which the protagonists were called "Tool Kit" and "Strong Program," and the denouement was, as yet, unknown. But this is to simplify greatly, for we are all aware of the need to encompass both meaning and situation, agency and structure, and a lot else besides.

For several years now I have been meditating on whether the concept of "social performance" might offer a resolution for this narrative. Might a multidimensional theory of social performance provide a way to bring together the different dimensions of social action in a manner that emphasizes cultural meanings but retains variable significance? Might it be possible to create a new performative turn in sociology, one which would highlight symbolic action and meaning, but would also systematically incorporate contingency, action, power, conflict, and stratification?

Toward this end, colleagues and I are putting into press a collective book, *The Move to Performance: Symbolic Action, Ritual, and Cultural Pragmatics*. My own approach is developed in "Cultural Pragmatics: Social Performance between Ritual and Strategy," which is forthcoming in the December issue of *Sociological Theory*, which is available at the website of the Yale Center for Cultural Sociology, <http://www.yale.edu/ccs>, link to "research."

One of the five Culture sessions at next year's ASA will feature invited presentations from this research program. Two other sessions are designed to solicit submissions on topics and issues related to performance in open-ended ways. **Mustafa Emirbayer** (emirbaye@ssc.wisc.edu) is organizing an open session called "Culture and Pragmatics: Theoretical Debates about Social Performance." Mustafa has himself, of course, made a series of singular contributions to this debate. He will be looking for conceptual papers that discuss texts and history, structuralism and pragmatics, strong programs and tool kits, and, if any of these

(continued on p. 12)

connect to the idea of social performance, so much the better. **Robin Wagner-Pacifici** (rwagner1@swarthmore.edu) will organize a second open session, called "Culture and Pragmatics: Empirical Studies of Social Performance." In her invigorating empirical-cum-theoretical studies, Robin has been unique in attending to cultural performance in micro, meso, and macro ways. She will be looking for empirical papers that are informed by the interrelation of culture and pragmatics and, again, if they are also about performance, so much the better!

With a nod to the distressing climate in which we find ourselves today — and I don't mean global warming — I have asked **Philip Smith** (philip.smith@yale.edu) to organize a session called "Culture, Violence, and War." Philip has written extensively, both theoretically and empirically, about wars, violent crimes, civility, and punishment — all from a deeply original, cultural point of view — and his book, *War Genres: The Cultural Politics of Suez, the Gulf War, and the War in Iraq* is forthcoming with University of Chicago Press. As far as orienting your submissions to this session, the title speaks for itself!

Our last session will, once again, be devoted to Roundtables, a venue that has proved so productive for highlighting the plethora of exciting new work that cultural sociologists are producing each year. **Ron Jacobs** (rjacobs@csc.albany.edu) has kindly agreed to organize these sessions.

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