In a just published edited volume (Swedberg 2014) and a series of recent articles (2012; in this newsletter: 2009, 2010; see also Espeland 2012), Richard Swedberg has made the compelling argument that we must begin to shift our attention away from theory (as a finished product or object of contemplation and exegesis) to theorizing (as the analysis of the creative, but systematic process that results in such products). According to Swedberg (2014: ix): “There is some reason to believe that the time is now ripe for … [a] sea change from theory to theorizing. One important reason for this has to do with the emergence a few decades ago of cognitive science … Cognitive scientists have by now made good inroads into the mysteries of human thought processes; and the findings point in a … different direction from the kind of logical reasoning that … has stood at the center of … theory in the social sciences. There exist many ways of thinking other than formal reasoning … images, analogies, metaphors, and what in everyday language is called intuition.”

Swedberg’s intervention is in many ways a timely one, and thoroughly consistent with both the recent (and not so recent) “practice” and “pragmatist” turns in social theory (Schatzki et al 2001). This perspective breaks with both positivist and humanist approaches to the creative project of producing theory. These two seemingly opposed perspectives actually converge on an ultimately irrationalist conceptualization of the task of theorizing. In the positivist view, the irrationalism of theoretical discovery is an embarrassment that must be dealt with by focusing our efforts on objectively justifiable procedures in the so-called context of justification. In the humanistic perspective the irrationalism of theoretical discovery is a virtue to be celebrated, but one that must be forever protected from the profaning glare of explanation and analysis.

The new theorizing movement shares with practice and pragmatist sociologies a rationalistic commitment to view theory as an acquired skill, and thus one that while normally living in the tacit domain can be subject to systematic analysis and can ultimately be taught using traditional pedagogical techniques (Vaughan 2014). This is important because explicit allegiance to a romantic irrationalist model of the creative theorist leads to an ultimately anti-democratic conception of theorizing as a non-transferable aptitude, and of the theorist as a select genius who just happens to possess that aptitude.

As noted in the opening quotation, one way in which both Swedberg and other analysts behind the new theorizing movement (e.g. Knorr-Cetina 2014) propose that we move towards the systematic analysis of the theorizing process is by borrowing tools from the disciplinary fields that are in fact in charge of the systematic study of cognition. These include, in addition to cognitive psychology and the psychology of reasoning, such fields as cognitive linguistics, the cognitive study of analogical thinking.

(continued on pg 2)
and cognitive semantics (see Evans and Green 2006 for an introduction).

This move strikes me as the right one to make. If the traditional understanding (whether humanistic or positivist) of theoretical cognition has been resolutely anti-naturalist, a move towards a cognitive understanding of theorizing can be understood as part of a larger movement towards naturalism in the study of culture and cognition (see e.g. Sperber 1996; Bloch 2013). In this way, the new theorizing movement can be understood as an attempt to develop a naturalistic understanding of theoretical cognition in social theory. This approach links nicely with recent moves towards both cognitive science and naturalism in the philosophy and history of science (see e.g. Giere 2010).

As Swedberg (2014) has argued, the first lesson that can be gleaned from this naturalistic understanding of theoretical cognition is that the folk model of theoretical thinking, namely, as the manipulation of propositional abstractions removed from experience, is misleading. This leads to a related break with the folk model of theory building, namely, the development of deductive systems of propositions joined by linkages of logical implication. Instead, the view of thinking that has emerged in recent approaches to cognition can be summarized in one sentence: abstract thought is fundamentally grounded in experience (Barsalou 2010; Lakoff and Johnson 1999). Theoretical thinking, rather than being the manipulation of pre-experiential abstractions, consists precisely in the generation of such abstractions from the concrete materials afforded by experience. The explicit delineation of the processes and mechanisms via which abstraction emerges from “modal” symbols grounded in experience (see e.g. Barsalou 2010) may thus hold the key to uncovering the (teachable) dynamics of theorizing.

I would like to focus my attention on the key role that conceptual metaphors play in theorizing by providing the link between experientially grounded source domains and (relatively) experientially distant target domains (Lakoff and Johnson 1999). The basic claim is that cognitive science has moved beyond the literary/aesthetic model of metaphor to a conceptual model in which metaphorical thinking serves as the basis of abstract reason. Insofar as theoretical cognition in social theory is precisely such a species of seemingly abstract reason, then it must be grounded in its own set of fundamental conceptual metaphors. If this is the case, considerations of theory in sociology which continue to rely on propositional models of thinking are not capable of shedding light on the nature of theorizing. In this respect, traditional approaches to what theory is, are bound to produce the wrong lessons for theorizing as a practice.

One important challenge is that we are only exposed to the conventionalized products of theorizing (theory as object or product). This leads us to ignore the huge amount of “backstage cognition” that goes into the generation of such conventionalized metaphorical linkages (the nuts and bolts of theorizing). This is particularly evident in highly conventionalized conceptual metaphors like “Society is a network,” and even for now “discredited” classical metaphors such as “Society is an organism.” In this respect, conventional theoretical finished products must be treated as complex objects to be reverse-engineered (see e.g. Lakoff and Johnson 1999 on “philosophical idea analysis”). This reverse-engineering process would in its turn uncover the complex process of meaning construction (theorizing) that went into the generation of the analogy. The study of theorizing would thus benefit greatly from the cognitive reverse-engineering of “classic” conceptual metaphors (and interlinked “chains” of such conceptual metaphors) since they disclose the creative discovery work that went into their construction and might provide general lessons for how to go about constructing better and more appropriate conceptual metaphors useful for our own theorizing endeavors.

Reverse engineering a classic conceptual metaphor chain in social theory

Figure 1 shows a diagram of the conceptual metaphor that links the “organism analogy” (Levine 1995) to such consequential theoretical innovations (continued on pg 6)
Systemic Edges as Spaces of Conceptual Invisibility

Saskia Sassen, Columbia University

The language of more inequality, more poverty, more imprisonment, more environmental destruction, and so on, is insufficient to mark the proliferation of extreme versions of familiar conditions. In Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy (Harvard University Press 2014), I examine a broad range of familiar processes which at some point become so extreme that the familiar language of “more of it all” ceases to explain.

My point of inquiry is the systemic edge – to be distinguished from the more familiar concept of interstate borders. Systemic edges are proliferating across diverse domains. Further, I conceive of these systemic edges as the point in sometimes long trajectories, when condition x becomes invisible. Let me illustrate briefly with a familiar case: at some point the long-term unemployed fall off the standard categories for measuring unemployment; they become statistically invisible. Another example is our standard measure for economic growth: GDP per capita – increasingly the space it measures leaves out significant numbers of people, places, and activities. Thus it measures a shrunken economic space, and in so doing can come up with some positive growth numbers, even as significant numbers of people, small businesses, and places have been expelled from “the” economy. I think of this as a kind of economic “cleansing.”

The proliferation of such systemic edges leads me to posit that we need a new analytics and new conceptual language to capture such extreme conditions. In the book I de-theorize our understanding of some of these major turns, and go back to ground level so as to capture the empirical details, in order thus to re-theorize.

These systemic edges constitute the point of expulsions. These expulsions take on specific forms in each place, whether in the Global South or in the Global North, East or West. And they take specific contents in diverse domains – economy, society, politics, biosphere. Indeed they are so specific in each place and domain that it is difficult to see that they might be, as I propose in this book, the surface manifestations of deeper trends that today cut across the familiar divisions. Each of the expulsions I examine tends to be studied by a specialized discipline exclusively focused on itself. For instance, to return to the two examples mentioned here: the experts of long-term unemployment in the Global North do not really study the displaced due to war, the making of plantations, floods and such, in the Global South. What I privilege conceptually is the fact that regardless of genesis, both throw people out of their life space. At ground level they are out, and it is this crossing of systemic edges and the spaces of the expelled that I want to highlight. (And I can only do so because there are vast specialized scholarships that focus on the causes of longterm unemployment in the Global North, and population displacements in the Global South. These are just two examples of a whole range of such crossings of systemic edges.)

Once the unemployed or the displaced, or so many other versions of the expelled, cross this systemic edge they enter a sort of space of conceptual invisibility. Thus they are less likely to be counted in measures of GDP per capita or in censuses of all sorts. Importantly, all of these expulsions can coexist with growth in “the” economy, even if the space of that economy is shrinking. This coexistence of expulsions and growth as conventionally measured, further adds to the invisibility of those who are expelled from job and home.

This space of conceptual invisibility holds for people, places, failed small businesses, neighborhoods destroyed by hurricanes, neighborhoods destroyed by mortgage foreclosures, land and water destroyed by our industrial and other practices. For instance, dead land and dead water are not marked, they are simply bypassed; thus I argue we should make them visible in our maps as a distinct type of jurisdiction.

A key focus in the book is how complex forms of knowledge can generate such expulsions. This brings to the fore the fact that forms of knowledge and intelligence we respect and admire are often at the origin of long transaction chains that can end in very simple expulsions – not even grand expulsions, as when one builds an enormous dam. I select extreme cases because they make sharply visible what might otherwise remain confusingly vague. We respect specialized knowledge on the basis of its knowledge-making features and enables, such as their paths for research and associated discoveries. But when we place such knowledge systems in larger transaction chains, we can get a very different insight into such bodies of knowledge.

One example of how very complex forms of knowledge can get deployed to produce elementary expulsions is the so-called sub-prime mortgage developed in the 2000s. This was a financial project, aimed at developing new types of asset-backed securities and collateralized debt. It is not to be confused with the state-sponsored sub-prime mortgages of an earlier period, aimed at genuinely helping modest-income families to own a home. It used the modest homes involved to meet the growing demand for asset-backed securities by investors, in a market where the outstanding value of derivatives was $630 trillion, or 14 times the value of global GDP. The complexity of financial engineering was deployed to de-link the actual little house and modest value of the mortgage, from the asset-backed security developed on the backs of “the little people.” The challenge was that delinking, so that even if the buyers of the house could not pay, it really did not matter – the high investment circuit would have made its money and only those who had held on to the mortgages would suffer from the eventual crisis.

(continued on pg 10)
Andreas Glaeser’s *Political Epistemics* is arguably one of the most important works in the sociology of knowledge since the publication of Berger and Luckman’s classic, *The Social Construction of Reality*. Spanning over six hundred pages, Glaeser’s historical ethnography advances an “epistemic explanation” of the seemingly overnight demise of Eastern German socialism and, if this was not ambitious enough, also proposes a new field of inquiry (“political epistemology”) and theoretical framework (“sociology of understanding”). Addressed to numerous seminal sociological questions (e.g. agency, social change, identification), it provides an innovative account of the dynamic co-constitution of understandings and social institutions, labeled “hermeneutic institutionalism.”

Readers of Glaeser’s first book, *Divided in Unity*, will not be surprised by the new work’s theoretical depth and descriptive thickness. Similar to its predecessor, *Political Epistemics* is organized symmetrically around an intertwined set of theoretical and substantive concerns. Yet, unlike the former work, which entirely integrated theory and empirics, this book dedicates the introduction and chapters 3 and 4 entirely to theoretical explication. Given the magnitude of the book and this newsletter’s audience, I will concentrate mainly on its major theoretical/conceptual dimensions.

At the heart of *Political Epistemics* beats a preoccupation about the relationship between knowledge and politics. By foregrounding this issue, the book exhibits a topical affinity to Mannheim and Foucault, and on this accord distinguishes itself from much recent work in the sociology of knowledge. Affinities aside, Glaeser departs from these respective thinkers in serious ways. For instance, Foucault’s thesis on power/knowledge is rejected for failing to recognize that knowledge can, in fact, actually inhibit and weaken rather than enable and amplify the exercise of power. Foucault, Glaeser suggests, would be hard pressed to explain how the concentration of knowledge and power led to the inability of East German officials to adequately diagnosis and address the German Democratic Republic’s economic and political failings. Although in some ways more ambivalent, *Political Epistemics* shifts attention from Mannheim’s concern with the “existential determination” of political ideologies to a consideration of the production and effects of political knowledge. In Glaeser’s own words, political epistemology takes as its field of inquiry the “historically specific politics-oriented knowledge-making practices of people and their consequences” (p. xxvi). This succinct description, however, deserves some unpacking.

To begin, what is meant by politics? Any “deliberate effort to effect, maintain, or alter particular institutions” (p. 49). For Glaeser, politics refers to a kind of practice intentionally oriented towards social institutions, defined here as a regularized and stabilized social formation (whether selfhood, collective practices, or organizations). There are several ideal-typical political practices, including attempts to enable or prohibit particular individuals or groups from participating in institution formation, as well as efforts to manage public articulations and communication. Of special interest for Glaeser is what he calls “self-politics,” or politics reflexively focused on the maintenance of the institutions and organizations of which one is part. Importantly, politics is not limited to domains or actors conventionally understood as “political.” Although this enlarges the scope of politics (e.g. struggles over religious authority and campaigns to privatize education), it also narrows the meaning of politics and thus thankfully avoids the suggestion that “everything is political.”

As expressed in the description of political epistemology quoted above, Glaeser conceives of politics (and social life more generally) as contingent upon knowledge, or as he prefers, “understandings.” But unlike Foucault, he thinks that the relationship between knowledge and politics is fraught with ironies, contradictions, and unintended possibilities. Said crudely, understandings are indispensable to social life and politics because they enable human action. To an extent, this could be considered a moot point as cultural sociologists routinely claim that ‘culture’ or ‘meaning’ enable, as well as constrain human agency. While clearly resonant, Glaeser’s “sociology of understanding” has, I think, a more specific and generative thrust facilitated by the terminological shift from “knowledge” to “understanding.” The problem with the concept of knowledge, Glaeser insists, stems from a number of ontological and conceptual presuppositions. Among the most significant is the tendency, in scholarly as well as everyday contexts, to treat knowledge “as if it were an isolated independent object that sits somewhere on a shelf in our brains” (p. 165). Political epistemology, as conceived here, demands a concept that goes beyond consciousness and cognition, embraces contextual and processual (rather than a universal and static) ontology, and recognizes that particular understandings possess varying degrees of certainty (i.e. hunches versus facts). Additionally, I should note that this concept has the further benefit of providing a symmetrical account – as conceived by the “Strong Program” in the sociology of scientific knowledge – that can be fruitfully applied to the study of both expert and lay knowledge, and as a result it overcomes a bifurcation endemic to the field (c.f. Berger and Luckman 1966; Mannheim 1936).

Grounded firmly in the hermeneutic tradition (especially the writings of Vico and Herder), but with a twist of pragmatism, Glaeser develops the following definition of understanding:

(continued on pg 11)
Teaching and Learning Social Theory: Ideas for Graduate and Advanced Undergraduate Courses

Donald N. Levine, University of Chicago

The Appendix of my forthcoming volume, Social Theory as a Vocation: Genres of Theory Work in Sociology (Transaction Publishers, Autumn 2014), suggests some desiderata for a theory curriculum. These include the following:

1. A course in close reading. Intensive study of a substantial text and/or excerpts from diverse sources should constitute a good part, if not all, of at least one academic course.
2. In-depth overview of the oeuvre of at least one major classic author.
3. Consideration of major issues and insights of two traditions of social theory.
4. Courses that combine texts from philosophy and the social sciences: at least one addressing epistemological issues, the other(s) exploring normative and diagnostic issues.
5. A hands-on course in doing exercises in social theory work. Such experience serves, like nothing else, to excite and open students up to being critical consumers, skillful users, and potential creators of good theory work.

The Appendix of STV includes a sample of syllabi of my theory courses. (A larger sample is posted at donlevine.com/social-theory.) One of these represents the last of the above desiderata—a course offering participants opportunities to delve into the intellectual operations that constitute various genres of theory work. A description of that course follows.

Practicum in Social Theory

Most disciplines supply training of a practical sort: not only medicine and law and social work, but also physics, chemistry, and—in sociology—courses in applied statistics, research design, and both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Why not do the same for social theory?

This course fills that gap. In contrast to the usual type of course, which examines texts in order to glean their content and enhance the learner’s stock of knowledge, this practicum focuses on the intellectual operations involved in producing good work and offers opportunities to cultivate some of those capacities. Accordingly, each course unit contains two components. In the first, we examine selected texts that manifest some type of theory work. (A paradigm of types of theory work, first presented in the June 1997 issue of Perspectives, forms the organizing framework of STV.) Of those texts, we ask not what the author is saying, but what s/he is doing. The second part consists of exercises that afford practice in that kind of theory work. I present four of those units below. Others could include: Recovering Framework of STV. (Transaction Publishers, Autumn 2014), suggests some desiderata for a theory curriculum. These include the following:

Defining and Justifying Problems

Defining a problem with gripping clarity and providing rationales for why the problem is significant—that must be one of the most formidable challenges for writers at any level. Well-known texts that exemplify this process include Adam Smith’s four-page Introduction to The Wealth of Nations; the Preface and Introduction of Durkheim’s, The Division of Labor in Society; and the Author’s Introduction to Weber’s Protestant Ethic.

One way I reveal the ingredients of this kind of theory work is to see how different authors go about defining an ostensibly common problem. On the subject of social conflict, for example, I assign the Introduction to Kenneth Boulding’s Conflict and Defense; Georg Simmel’s “The Problem of Sociology” and “Conflict”; and introductory passages of Lewis Coser’s The Functions of Social Conflict. Boulding, viewing war as the most important intellectual and moral question of the century, wants to generate a theory of conflict that will provide resources for preventing or resolving conflicts. Simmel, seeking to study the forms of human association, proposes to investigate social conflict as a process that keeps antagonists in continuing interaction. Coser, concerned about the lack of sociological attention to conflict in the 1950s and perceiving conflict as important for social progress, directs his inquiry toward identifying the positive functions of social conflict.

For this unit, as in others, I assign two kinds of exercises. The first assignment is to recover the arguments of authors in texts discussed in class or read outside of class. Thus, “Contrast the way that Lewis Coser, in The Functions of Social Conflict – or in ‘Some Social Functions of Violence’ – justifies the study of social conflict with the comparable rationales of Simmel and Boulding.” For the second, “Formulate a problem that you might be interested in investigating and justify why you consider that problem worth studying.”

Specifying Ignorance and Discovering New Problems

One type of theory work highlighted by Robert K. Merton is discovering new problems through the specification of ignorance, whereby “yesterday’s unrecognized ignorance becomes today’s specified ignorance … It requires a newly informed theoretical eye to detect long-obsured pockets of ignorance as a prelude to newly focused inquiry” (Merton 1996, 53-6). Max Weber’s question of how religious traditions affect the ways people carry out economic activities is a notable case in point.

More recently, consider Robert Putnam’s discovery of the problem he symbolizes as Bowling Alone (2000).

(continued pg 12)
Lizardo, continued

as the notion of societies as “systems” or “networks.” The diagram is to be read roughly chronologically, taking us from the end of the nineteenth century (when the organism metaphor still dominated the thought of such figures as Durkheim and Schaffle) to the middle of the twentieth century. Conceptual metaphor chains are formed via metaphorical extensions from a (usually concrete) source domain to a less experientially available target domain (represented by a solid, asymmetric, horizontal arrow). Once two domains have been linked via conceptual metaphor, the shared structure that motivated the linkage between two domains becomes available for cognitive manipulation. This results in the induction of a schema (representing that shared structure). This is represented in the figure by an upwards pointing broken arrow. Once a schema has been induced, then it is available for the purposes of categorizing lower order (less abstract) elements. In the figure, elements are arranged from the top down on a gradient of decreasing abstraction. The elements enclosed in boxes with solid, thicker lines are those that are the most cognitively intuitive (experience near) members of the conceptual metaphor chain; elements enclosed in boxes drawn with lighter, broken lines represent less intuitive (experience distant) members of the overall conceptual metaphor chain. Less intuitive members of the conceptual chain are conceptualized via asymmetric conceptual metaphors that link them to more intuitive ones.

The figure is meant to illustrate that the most consequential conceptual extension in the history of sociological theory comes from 19th century organicism and the so-called “organism” analogy (Levine 1995). This is represented as the metaphorical conceptualization of society as a “type” of organism. The link goes from the source domain organism to the target domain society, which opens up the opportunity for theorists to develop a super-ordinate schema that captures some higher-level feature that is shared by both societies and organisms. This results in the extraction of a high-level schematic feature (schema induction) as a candidate to play that role: the fact that both organisms and societies have a “structure” that sustains itself over time (Radcliffe-Brown 1940).

Social structures: The conceptualization of a social structure as a concrete, observable “network” of “actually existing relations” was first made explicit and central to sociological structuralism by Radcliffe-Brown (1940: 2), in his influential (and ultimately canonical) definition of social structure. This definition was taken almost without modification by network structuralists such as Blau (1974) and survives to this day almost intact in network theory. Even though Radcliffe-Brown’s definition sounds “abstract” and non-analogical in his use of such scientific-sounding terms as “pattern” and “network” and his empiricist claim that structures were clearly out there for anybody to see, it is clear that Radcliffe-Brown had to conceptually rely on the organism analogy for his fundamental conceptualization of structure as a concrete pattern which in fact (partially) transcended what could be directly observed by the analyst at any given point in time.

Radcliffe-Brown was actually refreshingly reflexive about this, when he noted that “analogies, properly used, are important aids to scientific thinking and there is a real and significant analogy between organic structure and social structure” (1940: 6). Thus, the source domain of organic structure was used as a metaphorical resource to conceive of the hard to intuit target domain of social structure. Once these two domains are linked, then the analyst can induce the schema that extracts what they have in common: both organic and social structures are “really existing” networks of relations wherein parts are joined into structured wholes.

Here is how Radcliffe-Brown sets up the structural analogy between the two domains:

“Social structures are just as real as are individual organisms. A complex organism is a collection of living cells and interstitial fluids arranged in a certain structure; and a living cell is similarly a structural arrangement of complex molecules. The physiological and psychological phenomena that we observe in the lives of organisms are not simply the result of the nature of the constituent molecules or atoms of which the organism is built up, but are the result of the structure in which they are united. So also the social phenomena which we observe in any human society are not the immediate result of the nature of individual human beings, but are the result of the social structure by which they are united” (1940: 3).

Social systems: The other consequential metaphorical extension emerging from the organism metaphor is the one that results in sociological systems functionalism. The difference is that while the British functionalists were content to rest with a somewhat abstract notion of “structure” based on anatomical organization (paying only lip service to the dynamic or “physiological” entailments of the metaphor), Parsons extracts a more holistic (feature-rich) schema for organisms as biological systems and uses it as a metaphorical source domain with which to conceptualize the more abstract target domain of social systems. This schema for organisms was more detailed than the one that only schematized their anatomical organization, since it specified both structural and “physiological” components in the source domain and projected these features onto social systems in the target domain. Under this rendering, organisms were seen as both organized wholes decomposable into parts (as with the British anthropological functionalists) and as homeostatic, feedback-processing, pattern-maintaining “systems” in relations of material and informational exchange with an external environment (Parsons 1968).

Gouldner (1973: 190) points out that “[t]he recurrent use of organismist models” is justified by “the fact that organisms are examples of systems. To the extent that the organismist model has proved fruitful in sociological analysis it has been so because the organism was a paradigmatic case of a system.” In terms of contemporary models of categorization, we can interpret Gouldner’s assertion as implying that (individualized) organisms are the basic level prototype for the notion of system. A “system” is the abstract schematic representation of an organism, which then may be used to characterize any other entity that shares schematic features with organisms (such as boundedness and patterned organization). Once again, Gouldner (1973: 190) was keenly perceptive in this regard.

(continued on pg 7)
Lizardo, continued

as he noted that “…the organicist model has been misleading in sociological analysis precisely in so far as it led to a focus on characteristics which were peculiar to the organism but not inherent in the generalized [schematic] notion of a ‘system’.”

We can describe this process as a metaphorical extension from the schematized (but still relatively concrete) notion of organisms as biological systems to the harder to conceptualize target domain of societies as social systems, followed by a second line of upwards schema induction that allows us to extract which both biological and social systems have in common (they are both systems of interdependent parts); hence the hybrid label of structural-functionalism. Once this step is taken it becomes almost impossible for the theorist bent on all-out generalization to resist the temptation to derive a schema subsuming those generalized features that were shared by biological and social systems. This is essentially the generalized systems functionalism of the “middle-period” Parsons (1951), which survives to this day in the form of so-called “systems theory.”

This account sheds (reductive) light on the reasons why there were in fact two distinct lines of organicist structuralism in twentieth century social theory: the first one is the early line of thinking that emerges from functionalist anthropology and which is essentially concerned with the categorical extension of the notion of “social structure” using organic structure as a source domain in the 1930s and 1940s (Radcliffe-Brown 1940). The second one is the line of “structural-functionalism” that emerges out of sociology in the 1950s and which encompasses both structural and “physiological” features of the organism schema in using a conception of organisms as biological systems as a source domain (Parsons 1951).

Concluding Remarks

If we are to make progress in moving from theory to theorizing, we must understand the nature of theorizing as a process. Traditional propositional analyses of theorizing are fundamentally misleading in this regard. It is true that there are few social theorists who would actively defend propositional models of reasoning. However, these models continue to be implied in the theoretical practice of ignoring the experientially grounded bases of abstract conceptualization and in the continuing treatment of theories as sets of sentences united by links of logical entailment. In contrast to this view, I have proposed that theoretical conceptualization in science relies on the deployment of conceptual resources that are grounded in concrete experience, such as analogies, metaphors, and physically instantiated models (Giere 2010). This argument is consistent with recent advances in cognitive science regarding the poverty of propositional models of categorization, conceptualization, and abstraction (Barsalou 2010).

A renewed concern with the mechanics of theorizing leads to the insight that the “logic” that animates even the most abstract propositions in social theory is non-propositional and built from the creation of systematic correspondences between (relatively) concrete source domains and more abstract target domains. Some of these products of the theoretical imagination may become entrenched and conventionalized in the form of pervasive (or even “dead”) analogies (such as the organism metaphor). Yet, their status as finished products hides the hard work of theoretical imagination and creativity that goes into their construction. Reverse engineering long-standing conceptual metaphors of this sort, such as the Parsonian conceptual metaphor “human agency is effort” (Silver 2011), may lead to both an appreciation of the creative work that went into their construction and towards the emancipation of our own theoretical imagination for the purpose of constructing novel ways of conceiving seemingly “abstract” domains.

References
I have assigned a number of high quality texts in sociology – by Weber, Durkheim, Goffman and so on – and then lectured on these and had discussions in class. The students have either had to take tests in class (undergraduates) or produce a paper at the end of the term (graduate students).

The result, I fear, has not been that successful. In many cases the students have not known what to do with the “theory” they have learned, once they have started to carry out research on their own. In quite a few cases, students have also come to me when they had finished their research, asking how they could add some theory to it, in order to improve the analysis.

For these and related reasons I feel today that the traditional way of teaching theory is partly misguided; and also that it helps to maintain the imbalance between methods and theory in sociology. While students today can take a number of courses in methods – quantitative as well as qualitative methods – that teach them how to carry out their research in a competent way, the classes they take in theory do not teach them how to deal with theory in a similarly competent manner.

Much of the reason for this has in my view to do with the fact that while methods is taught as a practical enterprise – you learn methods in the same way that you learn to bike or to swim, that is, by doing it – this is not the case with theory. A way of teaching theory that is centered around doing it needs to be devised, that is, a way of teaching theory in such a way that the students can learn to theorize in a practical way. While theory is the end product of theorizing, we need to focus much more on the process that precedes the formulation of a theory than we currently do.

Two quick clarifications are necessary at this point. First, to focus on teaching students how to theorize does not mean that (existing) theory is not taught. Knowing some theory is indispensable; and most sociologists naturally use existing concepts and theories in their research. Second, theorizing in an empirical science like sociology means theorizing of empirical material, not spinning theories out of one’s head.

Let me now return to the courses in theorizing that I have been teaching during the last few years and describe them. In doing this, my intention is not to present the way I have done this in the hope that others will do the same. I definitely think that a shift from teaching (exclusively) theory to (also) theorizing is the right way to go. But it is clear that this shift can only take place if many people start experimenting and trying out new, practical ways of teaching theorizing. What follows, in other words, is just one example of how theorizing can be taught; and it is my hope that others will find the general idea of carrying out this kind of experimental teaching interesting enough to try it out for themselves. If that would happen, we may already in a few years be able to establish a new way of teaching theorizing & theory – and thereby restore a bit of the balance between theory and methods in social science.

My Attempt to Teach Theorizing to Graduate Students

The number of students in my classes in theorizing has typically been small, and each session has lasted for two to three hours. During the first hour I have lectured on theorizing, leaving time for questions and discussion. This has been followed by a break and a session in which the students present the results of their exercises in theorizing (more on these in a moment). During the second hour I try to say very little, and if I say something it is mainly to encourage the students to speak up.

During the first hour I have tried to lecture on each of the main stages of the theorizing cycle as I see it. This means that I have talked about the need to begin the theorizing process by observing something in a broad but nonsystematic manner (Stage 1), to then name the phenomenon (Stage 2), develop some concepts, a typology, perhaps a classification (Stage 3), and finally try to come up with an explanation (Stage 4). Once this has been done I have talked about such topics as memory, imagination and intuition, and why knowing some cognitive science is useful for theorizing.

I have sometimes also mixed the teaching of theorizing with lecturing on theory during the first hour. In these cases I have started out the course by explaining what theorizing is all about and also argued that if you are interested in theorizing, you will want to read works in theory from a different perspective than what is usually done. What is said in the text is always of interest, but ideally you also want to know how the author got to that point, and what you can learn from this.

My general impression is that both of these approaches work fairly well. Which of them is preferable, I have also found, depends to some extent on how much sociological theory the students know. Many students only take one course in theory during their graduate education, and when this is the case, giving them some knowledge of theory and theorizing at the same time is necessary.

The second hour of the class, when I teach theorizing, is devoted to a discussion of the practical exercises that the students have been assigned. I try to follow the principle that all students must get a chance to speak, and that all should get the same amount of time. The students typically use their allotted time to speak about their exercises – what they have come up with, and what happened when they tried to carry out the exercise.

I have experimented with two different types of exercises in theorizing. Both of them have been take-home exercises, with one for each meeting of the course. I have by now come to the conclusion that the first of my two types of exercises was not very good. I will nonetheless describe it, to give a sense of what I tried to accomplish and why I changed it.

The first type of exercise I experimented with had as a goal to teach the students how to carry out the full cycle of theorizing, all the way from selecting a topic to coming up with a tentative explanation. If the students were to do this repeatedly during the course, I thought, they would get the gist of it and soon be able to theorize on their own. (continued on pg 9)
Swedberg, Continued

The first task when you theorize, I argued to myself, is to come up with a topic you are really interested in and for which you have some kind of affinity. But how can this be done in an exercise? My answer was the following. Why not let the students read an inspiring article and pick something that they think is really interesting? Once they have done this, they should try to explore this topic with the help of free association.

The purpose of making the students use the technique of free association was to make them develop their topics in new and creative directions. They should also feel free to change their topic, I told them, if they come across something more interesting in the process. In thinking about topic X, they might start thinking about Y – and end up with topic Z.

Once they had settled on a topic, the students were told that they should try to name it, develop some concepts, and so on. They should continue with this all the way until they had come up with a tentative explanation. I told the students that it is often hard to complete the full cycle of theorizing, and that they might not always be able to get to the stage of providing an explanation.

Another reason for having the students repeatedly engage in free association during the course was to make them aware that they can use certain ways of thinking that they normally would not associate with theory, to become better at theorizing. It was also a way to make them focus squarely on themselves, and realize how creative they can be.

The texts I had chosen were social science texts that I thought were full of ideas and therefore would be inspiring. Some of the texts I used were the following: “Body Techniques,” by Marcel Mauss; “Sociology of the Senses,” by Georg Simmel; and “Lyrical Sociology,” by Andrew Abbott. Occasionally I would also let the students read texts by poets and philosophers, because I wanted them to realize that work in these two genres can be very inspiring for social scientists. For philosophy I used Kant’s “What Is Enlightenment?” For poetry I relied on the work of Emily Dickinson, and poems such as “Remembrance has a rear and front” and “The heart asks pleasure first.”

After having taught theorizing in this way for a while, however, I began to realize that the idea of using an inspiring text to help the students find a topic to theorize had one serious weakness. This was that it did not teach the students the importance of starting out from empirical observations when you theorize. Related to this, there was not much for them to theorize about, except the text itself and what they already knew.

The idea of engaging in free association appealed to the students because it made them feel that they could be creative, and that they had a source of creativity within themselves that they could draw on. Still, it was no substitute for observation. I also noticed that the students tended to select topics that they already had some knowledge of; and this finally made me realize that it would be better if I somehow could include the stage of observation in the exercise.

As a result I have now changed the initial part of the exercise, and today I ask the students to select a topic they are interested in but do not already work on. My reason for having them select a totally new topic is that several students have told me that they feel freer to theorize when they are not already familiar with a topic.

The students are also told to quickly research the topic they have chosen, and that they can use whatever source they think can teach them something about the topic. Since time is short, one way of doing the research is to use the Internet, with its many different types of material. Alternatively, a few interviews can be conducted, perhaps in combination with introspection or self-observation and a physical inspection of the research site.

After having done mini-observations of this type, the students will proceed, as in the first version of this exercise, to give a name to the phenomenon they have chosen, develop concepts related to it, and suggest an explanation. As they work their way through each of these stages, I tell them that they should use their concepts, types, and so on also for heuristic purposes, and that the technique of free association can be helpful in this.

Since I still think that it is important for the students to run through the full cycle of theorizing a few times, I assign the students three of these exercises during the course of a term. This means in practice that each cycle is allotted three weeks or three meetings (in a three-semester system).

During week one, a topic is chosen and observed. During week two, it is named, and concepts plus perhaps a typology or a classification are developed. During week three, an effort is made to come up with an explanation.

My experience from teaching classes according to this schedule is that this works pretty well. But people also sometimes get stuck at stage two or extend the stage of observation into stage two. My response to this is to emphasize that the initial effort should always be to go from observation over concept formation and the like to an explanation – but also that things may end up a bit differently.

During each meeting in class the students report on what they have done. In preparation for this, and also as a way to record their thoughts, they have been instructed to write down how they have proceeded, using one to two pages. I give no instructions for how these notes should be written, since I want the students to develop their own capacity to record what they consider important about their attempts to theorize and what these have led to.

The notes are not to be handed in or in some other way approved or disapproved by the teacher; they are exclusively for the use of the students. I do not want the students to feel that the teacher is standing behind them when they write their notes, whispering in their ear that this is excellent, this is not so great, and the like.

Besides these weekly tasks, the students also have to write a paper about their experience, (continued on pg 10)
Swedberg, Continued

which I describe to them as a kind of autoethnography in theorizing. In this paper the students are to record how they have tried to theorize during the course, what they think has been successful, and what they did not do so well. The papers, I say, should be ten to twenty pages long.

The students are told to comment on each of the exercises during the course in their paper. They are also told that they can include excerpts from their written notes, since it is important to be able to document how they went about things at the moment when they tried to theorize.

The papers I have received in these courses are among the most interesting and alive student papers I have ever read. My general impression is also that the students really like that the focus of the course is squarely on them, on how each of them has as a task to develop their own capacity to theorize.

The positive response that I have had to these courses shows, in my view, that they fulfill a deeply felt need among the students to learn theory in a new way, one that focuses on how to theorize in practice and not just on the content of various theories. In a few cases I have also been able to follow the work of the students after they have taken a course in theorizing; and it is my impression that the course has been helpful for them in their later work.

Concluding Remarks

Much remains to be done before we have figured out how to teach theorizing in an effective and practical way to students. This also includes how to teach theorizing to undergraduates, something I have never done since I have not been able to figure out a way to do this. When I teach theorizing I feel that it is necessary to focus on every student and let every student speak, and the classes with undergraduates have usually far too many students for this approach.

There do, however, exist some interesting attempts by sociologists to teach theorizing to undergraduate students (e.g. Rinehart 1999, McDuff 2012). They have typically dealt with my problem of how to deal with each individual student by dividing up the students into groups. For each class every student was given an individual task to prepare; and these were then discussed in the group. The group later reported its conclusions to the whole class, where more discussion took place.

This way of proceeding seems promising to me. Perhaps it would also be helpful to teach the students something about the parts that make up a theory. Knowing what constitutes a concept, an explanation, and so on is essential if you want to understand what a theory is, and how you go about constructing one.

Ideally I would also try to have some exercises that are aimed at the individual student and not the group. Just like you cannot learn how to swim or bike as a group, you need to learn how to theorize yourself. This is not a task that someone else can do for you.

Much clearly remains to be done before each student who goes through an undergraduate or graduate program in sociology will exit with as much skill in handling theory as in handling methods. Still, the problem of how to teach theory and theorizing in a practical and effective way is by no means hopeless. What is needed is basically some experimentation on a collective scale. And once this has taken place, and people are as good in theory as in methods, maybe sociology will go through a renaissance of sorts.

References


Sassen, continued

When this short and brutal history was over in 2010, over 13 million such contracts had been signed and 9 million households had lost their home according to the Federal Reserve – that could be about 30 million people or more. And now this instrument is circulating in Europe, where every year several hundred thousand households are losing their home. (See Tables in Chapter 2). The issue of invisibility is brought home, for instance in the fact that some of the highest numbers of foreclosures in Europe are happening in Germany, the country we think of as having avoided all forms of the crisis.

I juxtapose specific types of complex knowledge with what we can think of as specific applied outcomes. In the chapter on environmental destruction, called Dead Land, Dead Water, this juxtaposition plays out on a very different set of vectors from those of the economy. For instance, the types of specialized knowledge in chemistry, engineering, geology, and more involved in hydraulic fracturing (commonly referred to as “fracking”) are impressive, but what it leaves behind is some fairly brutal and elementary destructions.

These expulsions are made. The tools for such making range from elementary policies to complex techniques requiring specialized knowledge and intricate organizational formats. And the channels for expulsion vary greatly. They include austerity policies that have helped shrink the economies of Greece and Spain, and environmental policies that overlook the toxic emissions from enormous mining operations. Together the diverse expulsions across countries and domains I examine in the book may well have a greater impact on the shaping of our world than the rapid economic growth in India, China, and a few other countries.
Rodríguez-Muñiz, continued

“a process of orientation from within a particular pursuit in a specific context, which orders relevant aspects of the world by simultaneously differentiating and integrating it, thus stipulating a practical ontology” (p. 10, italics in original). In other words, understandings do not just help people make sense of their social world, they also orient and direct action (and reactions) within unfolding experiential contexts. He identifies three major modes of understanding – discursive, emotive, and kinesthetic – that can be analytically distinguished, and are relatively autonomous from each other, though variably intertwined in practice. Glaeser describes these modes as something like genres, in the sense that they are structured in particular ways. For instance, discursive understandings are fully symbolic and thus the most plastic, while emotive understandings are subject-centric and embodied. However, most important for the broader project is the recognition that these different modalities and their situational interrelation have variable effects on action (and thus on institution formation). For example: nationalist understandings have at times compelled individuals to willingly sacrifice their lives in defense of the “nation,” and yet at other moments have had no visible effect whatsoever. How do we account for this variation in what Glaeser calls the “actionability” of understandings?

Of course, sociologists have long grappled with this question in one form or another. Generally speaking, the discipline, especially in the U.S. context, has tended to answer this question in terms of “structural” factors and macro dynamics. Echoing Latour and other Actor-Network Theory founders, Glaeser notes that this perspective can lead to a “sociology of shadows,” which fetishizes institutions rather than accounts for their generation, transformation, and decline (p. 55). It is this latter issue – integral to his definition of politics – that Glaeser considers the linchpin of social life and, consequently, the primary object of political epistemology. With this interest in the formation of institutions, Glaeser explains the potentiality of understandings to actualize action through what he calls, processes of “validation.”

By validation, Glaeser means the process through which understandings are rendered “certain” and in a sense institutionalized. The more validated an understanding is the more likely that the understanding will stimulate (or conversely discourage) action. Glaeser discusses three major forms of validation: recognition, corroboration, and resonance.

As elaborated in chapter 3, recognition is the legitimation of understandings by others, a point that raises questions of power. Corroboration refers to processes of validation as understandings confront the world, whether as directly experienced or indirectly mediated. The last and third type, resonance, refers to the consistency or “fit” between different understandings. As Glaeser summarizes, “we come to inhabit our understandings through the encounter with others whose authoritative judgment recognizes ours; through the interactions with people and the material world in which success gives us confidence in our ways of ordering the world; and finally by checking understandings against our established knowledge, our values, feelings, desires, and skills” (p. 25-26). Key to its underlying social ontology is the point that validations (and social processes more generally) must be constantly and regularly enacted; if understandings are not regularly validated they lose force; if actions/reactions are not coordinated on an ongoing basis institutions decline. Consequently, this book shows how understandings, far from peripheral, are critical to social change and continuity.

Andreas Glaeser has written a formidable book, of which I have only discussed but a part. Space limitations prohibit elaboration of a number of concepts and theoretical arguments, as well as the book’s textured empirical analysis and well taken cautions against self-validating “circular” political epistemics. Yet, despite the originality of Political Epistemics, readers may – especially at first glance – miss the novelty of its contributions. Part of the reason for this can be attributed to the tone of the book. Glaeser admits little interest in adopting a “slash and burn” approach to knowledge building. He prefers instead to identify with rather than enter into polemics against the diverse theoretical lineages on which he draws. I believe the book would have benefited from a sharper delineation of how his intervention departs from earlier sociologies of knowledge, and especially the work of Berger and Luckman. Regardless, the contents of this work should be seriously engaged and debated. Along with several other recent works, Political Epistemics demonstrates that the sociology of knowledge (and understanding) has a bright future.

1. Glaeser labels his social ontology, “consequent processualism” (see also Glaeser 2005).

References
Andrew Abbott’s essay, “The Problem of Excess” (2014), offers an arresting example of this kind of work. So, for an exercise: (1) “Discuss critically the ways in which Merton and Abbott specify areas of ignorance, respectively, about deviance and excess.” And then (2) “Write a short piece in which you take a general subject area and specify ignorance as a way to formulating a new problem in that domain.”

Clarifying and Disambiguating Concepts

Clarifying concepts is the bread and butter of theory work; there must be hundreds of well-crafted exemplars of this genre. Durkheim offers a number of pertinent texts, including his analysis of the concept of ‘crime’ in the *The Division of Labor*, of ‘anomie’ in *Suicide*, and of religion in *The Elementary Forms*. From my own work, I might assign the extended clarification of the concept of ‘anomie’, the disambiguation of the concept of ‘rationality’ in the work of Weber and others, or the overview of efforts to disambiguate the concept of ‘freedom’ (Levine 1985: chs. 4, 7, & 9). Recent texts I would assign include two efforts: David Graeber, “On the Moral Grounds of Economic Relations: A Maussian Approach” (2014), and John Gray, “The Dangers of Democracy” (2014). Graeber is useful for pointing out the shortcomings of the concept of *le Don* produced by the conflated notion of giving in the classic essay by Mauss and its followers. Gray challenges conventional discourse, including the acclaimed book by Runciman he reviews, by failing to disambiguate the concepts of autocracy and democracy. For exercises, (1) “How does John Gray disambiguate the concepts of autocracy and democracy in ‘The Dangers of Democracy’ and what are some implications of his analysis?” and (2) “Analyze critically one or two concepts from the project you chose in exercises 1 or 2.”

Creating Analytic Schemata

Conceptual typologies comprise another notable contribution of theory work. For a classic text of this genre, I’ve assigned Merton’s typology of modes of individual adaption to norms: Conformity, Innovation, Ritualism, Retreatism, Rebellion. The work of Talcott Parsons is known for its profusion of four-fold tables. Those I find most generative include the paradigm of types of social sanctions, which he forms by cross-classifying positive and negative types with situational and intentional channels: inducement, persuasion, contingent coercion, and activation of value-commitments (guilting) (Parsons 1969, 448). The above-cited paper by Andrew Abbott presents a workmanlike construction of an eight-fold schema of strategies for dealing with excess by cross-classifying two ‘reduction’ strategies, defense and reaction, with the ‘rescaling’ strategies of creativity and adaptation, all four applied at both individual and social levels. For exercises: (1) “Discuss critically the ways in which Parsons generates a schema of diverse forms of social sanction (or other phenomena that he typologizes) and compare that with how Abbott schematizes the diverse ways of coping with excess.” (2) “Return to the concepts you have used in previous exercises and convert one or two of them into typologies of some sort.” The particular contents of such a course will vary with the interests of the participants. The heart of its curriculum will be the practice and feedback provided when students carry out efforts of theory work themselves, as well as the mentoring in this novel way of reading texts.

Addendum: a note on connecting with anthropological theory

I would now supplement the above by calling attention to the value of linking social theory discourse to theory discourse in neighboring disciplines, especially anthropology and political science. The long divorce between anthropology and sociology has hurt both traditions. Recent exemplary issues of two journals of high quality bring this to mind poignantly. The February 2014 issue of the *Journal of Classical Sociology* contains a number of essays honoring the work of Marcel Mauss, whose work, like that of his uncle Emile Durkheim, straddles the domains of both areas. The March/May 2014 issue of *Theory, Culture, and Society* contains comparably illuminating essays on the generative anthropological theorist Marilyn Strathern.

1. With thanks to Daniel Silver, a fellow practicum practitioner, for perspicacious suggestions.

Works Cited

Junior Theorists Symposium—August 15, 2014

Please join us for the 2014 Junior Theorists Symposium on August 15, 2014, at the University of California (Berkeley). Details about the program follow. Questions? Contact Jordanna Matlon and Dan Hirschman at juniortheorists@gmail.com.

8:30 – 9:00 | Coffee and Bagels

9:00 – 10:50 | Culture, Action, and Difference
* Ellis Monk (University of Chicago) – "Bodily Capital: Capturing the Role of the Body in Social Inequality"
* Daniel Sherwood (The New School) – "Acting Through the Margin of Freedom: Bourdieu as a Social Movement Theorist"
* Brandon Vaidyanathan (Rice University) – "A Cultural Theory of Differentiation"
  Discussant: George Steinmetz (University of Michigan – Ann Arbor)

10:50 – 11:00 | Coffee

11:00 – 12:50 | Measures of Worth
* Alison Gerber (Yale University) – "Tradition, Rationalization and Worth: A Theory of Decommensuration"
* Michael Halpin (University of Wisconsin – Madison) – "Science and Sociodicy: Neuroscientific Explanations of Social Suffering"
* Katherine Kenny (University of California – San Diego) – "The Biopolitics of Global Health: Life and Death and Neoliberal Time"
  Discussant: Marion Fourcade (University of California - Berkeley)

12:50 – 2:00 | Lunch

2:00 – 3:50 | Place and Perspective
* Hillary Angelo (New York University) – "From the City as a Lens to Urbanization as a Way of Seeing: Refocusing Social Categories for an Urban Planet"
* Jennifer Carlson (University of Toronto) – "Citizen-Protectors: Guns, Masculinity and Citizenship in an Age of Decline"
* Victoria Reyes (Princeton University) – "Global Borderlands: A Case Study of the Subic Bay Freeport Zone, Philippines"
  Discussant: Saskia Sassen (Columbia University)

4:00 – 5:30 | After-panel: The Boundaries of Theory
* Stefan Bargheer (University of California – Los Angeles)
* Claudio Benzecry (University of Connecticut)
* Margaret Frye (Harvard University)
* Julian Go (Boston University)
* Rhacel Parreñas (University of Southern California)

5:30 – ? | Theory in the Wild: Beer, wine, and good conversation (off-site)

The Junior Theorists Symposium is an open event. In order to facilitate planning, please RSVP by sending an email to juniortheorists@gmail.com with the subject line "JTS RSVP." To help cover event costs, we suggest an on-site donation of $20 per faculty member and $10 per graduate student. The exact locations will be announced later this summer.
THEORY SECTION SESSIONS

Theory Section Invited Session. Theorizing Events
Sun, August 17, 10:30am to 12:10pm

Session Organizer
Vida Bajc (Methodist University)

Presider
Lyn Spillman (University of Notre Dame)

Presenters
Andrew Abbott (University of Chicago): “Lineage as Structure: Social Entities as Lineages of Events”
Vida Bajc (Methodist University): “Event and Uncertainty”
Ivan Ermakoff (University of Wisconsin-Madison): “Assessing the Significance of Events”
Robin E. Wagner-Pacifici (New School for Social Research): “Events From the Ground Up”

Discussant
Thomas Scheffer (Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität)

Theory Section Invited Session. Future-Making in Sociological Theory
Sun, August 17, 12:30 to 2:10pm

Session Organizer
Iddo Tavory (New School for Social Research)

Presiders
Iddo Tavory (New School for Social Research)
Nina Eliasoph (University of Southern California)

Presenters
John R. Hall (University of California-Davis)
Ann Mische (University of Notre Dame)
Benjamin Harrison Snyder (Victoria University of Wellington)
Nina Eliasoph (University of Southern California)

Theory Section Invited Session. Iconic Consciousness: The Materiality of Meaning
Mon, August 18, 8:30 to 10:10am

Session Organizer
Jeffrey C. Alexander (Yale University)

Presider
Jeffrey C. Alexander (Yale University)

Presenters
Genevieve Zubrzycki (University of Michigan): “’Aesthetic Revolt’: How Icons Participate in Social Change”
Terry McDonnell (University of Notre Dame): “Cultural Entropy: Materiality and the Instability of Meaning”
Dominik Bartmanski (Masaryk University, Czech Republic) and Ian Woodward (Griffith University, Australia): “Rebirth of the Cool: The Analogue Record in the Digital Age”
Jeffrey C. Alexander (Yale University): “Iconic Consciousness: A New Sociological Theory”
THEORY SECTION SESSIONS

Theory Section Invited Session. Theory in an Era of Big Data
Mon, August 18, 10:30am to 12:10pm

Session Organizer
John W. Mohr (University of California-Santa Barbara)

Presider
John W. Mohr (University of California-Santa Barbara)

Presenters
Julia Potter Adams (Yale University), Hannah Brueckner (New York University-Abu Dhabi), Timothy Malacarne (Yale University), and Jesse Einhorn (Yale University): “Wikipedia, Theory, and Academic Knowledge”
Michael W. Macy (Cornell University): “Mining Theory”
Daniel A. McFarland (Stanford University): “Clash of the Paradigms? Big Data as a Trading Zone between Science, Engineering and the Humanities”
Brian Uzzi (Northwestern University): “Big Data and High Impact Scientific Discovery”

Discussant
Ronald L. Breiger (University of Arizona)

Coser Lecture
Theory Section Invited Session. Lewis Coser Memorial Lecture and Salon
Sun, August 17, 2:30 to 4:10pm

Session Organizer
Andrew J. Perrin (University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill)

Presider
Andrew J. Perrin (University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill)

Presenter
Omar A. Lizardo (University of Notre Dame)

Thematic Session. Bourdieu, Culture, and Empirical Research
Sun, August 17, 8:30 to 10:10am

Session Organizer
Annette Lareau (University of Pennsylvania)

Presider
Sabrina Pendergrass (University of Virginia)

Presenters
Loic Waquant (University of California-Berkeley): “How to Turn Habitus from Conundrum to Research Design”
Omar A. Lizardo (University of Notre Dame): “Bourdieu and the Hard Embodiment of Culture: Methodological and Theoretical Challenges”
Gabe Ignatow (University of North Texas): “Studying Culture in Digital Environments: Bourdieu, Big Data, and Interdisciplinary Collaboration”

Discussant
Diane Reay (Cambridge University)
THEORY REGULAR SESSIONS

Regular Session. Critical Theory I: Standpoints
Sat, August 16, 10:30am to 12:10pm

Session Organizer
Philip Mancus (College of the Redwoods)

Presider
Philip Mancus (College of the Redwoods)

Presenters
Lauren Langman (Loyola University-Chicago): “Critical Theory as Cultural Marxism Must be Marxist”
Alexander M. Stoner (Salisbury University) and Andony Melathopoulos (Dalhousie University): “Critique of/in the Anthropocene”
Harry F. Dahms (University of Tennessee-Knoxville): “Critical Theory Since The 1980s: Habermas and Honneth between Theory and Politics”
Phillip Drake (University of Chicago): “Nonhumans and Marxism: Exploitation and Alienation in ANT and Animal Studies”
Claudia Globisch (University of Innsbruck): “Sociology of Critique. Instancing the Management of Poverty by Social Policy”

Regular Session. Critical Theory II: Possibilities
Sat, August 16, 2:30 to 4:10pm

Session Organizer
Philip Mancus (College of the Redwoods)

Presider
Philip Mancus (College of the Redwoods)

Presenter
Vikash Singh (State University of New Jersey-Rutgers): “Definitive Exclusions: The Social Fact and the Subjects of Neo-Liberalism”
Mitch Monsour (University of Oregon): “Romantic Love as an Expression of Alienation”
Christine Anna Payne (University of California-San Diego): “The Question of Ideology in the Light of Desire – Truths in Marx, Nietzsche and Freud”

Regular Session. Social Theory
Tue, August 19, 2:30 to 4:10pm

Session Organizer
W. David Gartman (University of South Alabama)

Presider
W. David Gartman (University of South Alabama)

Presenters
Norbert F. Wiley (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign): “Bureaucratization as Class Domination: Weber vs. Critical Theory”
Mariana Craciun (Northwestern University): “Charismatic Practices: Power and Affect in Psychotherapy”
Edward Haddon (University of British Columbia): “Re-animating Class: Employing Marx, Weber and Durkheim as Adversaries to the “Death of Class” Hypothesis”
Laura Stark (Vanderbilt University): “What are “declarative bodies”? Experts, organizations, and Weber’s theory of bureaucracy in the twenty-first century”

Discussant
Douglas Marshall (University of South Alabama)
THEORY REGULAR SESSIONS

Regular Session. Habitus
Sun, August 17, 12:30 to 2:10pm

Session Organizer
Omar A. Lizardo (University of Notre Dame)

Presider
Omar A. Lizardo (University of Notre Dame)

Presenters
John Levi Martin (University of Chicago) and Benjamin Merriman (University of Chicago): “A Social Aesthetics as a General Cultural Sociology?”
Sharon Cornelissen (Princeton University): “Becoming a Dumpster Diver: Towards an Understanding of Habitus as Context-specific, Multiple and Decentralized”
Chantelle P. Marlor (University of the Fraser Valley): “Rethinking Bourdieu’s and Mauss’ Habitus through Neurophysiology: Ballet and Habitus”
Claire Laurier Decoteau (University of Illinois at Chicago): “The Reflexive Habitus: Bridging the Gap between Critical Realist and Bourdieusian Social Action”

Discussant
Omar A. Lizardo (University of Notre Dame)

Theory Roundtable and Business Meeting

Theory Section Roundtables (one-hour) Theory Section Business Meeting
Sunday, August 17, 2014, 8:30-9:30am Sun, August 17, 9:30 to 10:10am

Session Organizer
Claire Laurier Decoteau (University of Illinois at Chicago)

Conflict-War-Peace-Security Conference August 15, 2014

Join us on August 15, 2014, at the University of California – Berkeley for a mini-conference sponsored by the Section on Peace, War, and Social Conflict. Details about registration will be announced later. For questions, contact vida.bajc@gmail.com.

We have four panels. In “Faces of War,” Yagil Levy shows how states expose citizens, soldiers, and enemy combatants to harm in terms of the value of their life to the state. Jeff Goodwin considers motivations behind drone warfare. Jocelyn Viterna observes how the category of “motherhood” has been used in the war effort. Lisa Hajjar shows how state security practices and policies are challenged in court. Anthropologist Roberto Gonzalez comments on the papers.

“Mirrors of War in Everyday Life” reflects on how war strategies and thinking have found their way into social policies at home. This theme is developed by Andrew Lakoff in the area of public health, anthropologist Nancy Scheper-Hughes through her analysis of violence,” Loïc Wacquant in terms of urban marginalities and (in)securities, and Saskia Sassen in terms of global poverty and displacement. The panel is moderated by Raka Ray.

“Reflecting on Principles and Absolutes” is centered on state sovereignty and security. John Levy Martin considers how deterrence from war can shape state transformation. Miguel Centeno analyzes the recent shift toward reduction of mass armies in terms of equality, citizenship, and democracy. Andreas Glaeser asks how such absolutes as the notion of state sovereignty have come to be. The team of Robin Wagner-Pacifici, Ronald Breiger, and John Mohr offers a novel approach to analyzing policies defending another such absolute, state security. Anthropologist Paul Rabinow shares his reflections on the papers.

“Visions of Pasts and Futures” begins with two conflicts which have been dominating public discourse worldwide. John Torpey and Bryan Turner analyze the Sunni-Shi’a and Charles Kurzman the Israeli-Palestinian relations. Jack Goldstone suggests why revolutionary conflicts are likely to increase in the next decades. Sharon Napstad compares nonviolent movements and factors that influence their outcomes. It becomes the task of Ann Mische to conceptualize the links between various forms of contention, understandings of democracy and peace, and conceptions of security. The papers are discussed by Samera Esmeir from Berkeley’s Rhetoric Department.

The event creates a venue to deliberate on the following: Should there be a more focused research agenda in the study of the dynamics of war, security, peace, and conflict, and if so, what might such an agenda look like?
New Publications

Articles

Books