Symposia

Sociology and Border Disciplines: Opportunities and Barriers to Intellectual Growth

Cultural Studies and the Sociology of Culture*

JANET WOLFF
Department of Art and Art History
University of Rochester

Ten years ago, I moved from Britain to the United States. Before that date, I had taught for 13 years in a department of sociology in Britain. My geographical move also entailed an apparent change of disciplines (and, given the nature of the academy in Britain and the United States, also a change of academic divisions, from the social sciences to the humanities). But the change *was* only apparent, except in the material sense of my institutional location. My work didn't change radically (though I hope it has developed in the past decade). I didn't retrain, or take another Ph.D. This biographical fact is interesting, I think, not for its own sake, but because of what it says about the organization of disciplines in Britain and America, and about the study of culture in the late twentieth century.

There are a number of issues here. First, given my background and training in a certain kind of European sociology and my involvement already in interdisciplinary work, I am not sure that many departments of sociology in this country would have been prepared to give me a home. The discipline here has, as far as I can see, remained resolutely *intra*disciplinary as a collective project; moreover, it has manifested a strong attachment (in some cases, a growing one) to positivist scholarship, including quantitative and mathematical methods. For the most part, this has also been true of that subspecialization called the sociology of culture, many of whose practitioners continue to operate with untheorized and unexamined categories of social analysis.

Second, new emphases have emerged in the humanities, which have rendered certain sociologists welcome—new historicism, the new art history, postcolonial and feminist approaches to literature and culture, and so on. And third, the success and proliferation of cultural studies in the United States, in academic programs and in publishing, has provided new opportunities for such cross-departmental moves. Given my alienation from much American sociology, my lifelong interest in the study of culture, and the hospitality of the humanities, my current situation makes plenty of sense. Nor is my own change of discipline-home unique. Simon Frith, delivering his inaugural lecture as Professor of English at the University of Strathclyde, opened his talk in this way:

> I ought to begin by saying that I am honoured to be giving this lecture, and indeed I am, but I have to confess that my dominant emotion is surprise. I haven't studied English formally since I did O levels, and I still find it a peculiar turn of events that I should now be a professor of English. My academic training was in sociology, and I'm tempted to treat this lecture as a sociological case study: what does it tell us about the present state of English studies that a sociologist can chair an English department? (Frith 1998: 3)[1]

Nevertheless, since taking over in 1991 as director of an interdisciplinary humanities pro-

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[1] In England, O-level exams were taken at age 16.

gram[2] I have somehow felt that my "mission" was to encourage a "sociological imagination" among graduate students in a program, after all, initially founded by the collaboration of colleagues in art history, film studies, and comparative literature, and only more recently including the participation of colleagues from anthropology and history. (There is no longer a department of sociology at the university.) I have wanted to direct students to the texts and methods of sociology and social history, and to urge them to supplement their interpretive and critical readings of visual texts with attention to the institutional and social processes of cultural production and consumption.

In my opinion, cultural studies at its best is sociological. Yet, in the continuing cross-disciplinary dialogue that has characterized cultural studies in the decade or so of its progress in the United States, the discipline of sociology has been notably absent. At the same time, within sociology, the study of culture has expanded enormously in the last 20 years among sociologists of culture, and among those who have more recently been calling themselves "cultural sociologists"—which is not the same thing. (I will come back to these terms later.) Some of these sociologists have themselves adopted the term *cultural studies* to describe their work, thereby claiming (mistakenly, as I shall suggest) to have pre-empted the newer field, and ignoring the possibility of a productive encounter with cultural studies in general and with related developments in the study of culture in the humanities. Within the past couple of years, this has begun to change, and some of the newer work in this area has begun to bridge the hitherto radical divide between sociology and cultural studies.

My main intention here is to stress the advantages that will ensue if sociologists enter into the interdisciplinary dialogue that constitutes the ever-changing field of cultural studies. A good deal of what I have to say consists of a critical review of recent developments in sociology, a discipline which for the most part has still not come to terms with the fact that, as Avery Gordon has put it, "the real itself and its ethnographic or sociological representations are . . . fictions, albeit powerful ones that we do not experience as fictions but as true" (1997: 11). I review this work not so that I can simply dismiss it, but because, first, it retains a very high profile in the study of culture within the discipline of sociology; and, second, because, as I shall show, it makes claims either to supersede or to displace cultural studies. (I should point out here, though, that other branches of sociology, less visible and less influential, offer more promising approaches to the field, especially work influenced by the Frankfurt School.[3]) My critique of trends in sociology is motivated entirely by my hope for a productive encounter between cultural studies and sociology. The benefit to both fields will be the mutual recognition that—again to quote Avery Gordon—"the increasingly sophisticated understandings of representation and of how the social world is textually or discursively constructed still require an engagement with the social structuring practices that have long been the province of sociological inquiry" (1997: 11).

What sociologists can contribute to the project of cultural analysis is a focus on institutions and social relations, as well as on the broader perspective of structured axes of social differentiation and their historical transformations—axes of class, status, gender, nationality, and ethnicity. You don't, of course, have to be a sociologist to pay attention to these analytic dimensions, and there are certainly cultural studies scholars who do just this kind of work. (Stuart Hall, Tony Bennett, and Angela McRobbie come to mind.) For example, the focus on the ideology and practices of the museum has been prominent in some important work in recent years in what is usually called "museology" or "museum studies," most of it done by people who are not trained in sociology. My suggestion, rather, is that the fact that such questions constitute the *raison d'être* of sociology is enough reason to want sociologists to contribute to the debate about the study of culture.

The sociological perspective is invaluable in directing attention to certain critical aspects in the production of culture. But my concern to see sociology figure more centrally in visual studies, and in cultural studies more generally, is expressed in a context in which institutional and social issues are too often ignored, and in which, as Steven Seidman has put it, the social

[2] The Program in Visual and Cultural Studies at the University of Rochester.

[3] Paul Jones made this point to me, as an important corrective to what might seem to be a too generalized account of American sociology.

is often "textualized" (1997: 41). A lot has been written about the "Americanization of cultural studies," much of this writing critical of the trend (Budd 1990; Pfister 1996). Some writers object to what they perceive as a depoliticization of the project in its move from Britain (and originally, of course, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham) to the United States—its detachment from social movements and its increasingly professionalized and rarefied life in the academy. Others have noted that the proliferation of cultural studies scholarship and teaching through the 1980s and 1990s has occurred largely (though not solely) in humanities departments, especially departments of English and Comparative Literature; and they see an abandonment of the more sociological approach, which understands culture in terms of axes of stratification and inequality (primarily class relations in the early years of the Birmingham Centre, but later also relations of gender and race). Cary Nelson, in one of the more impassioned critiques of this trend, describes American cultural studies as a kind of textualism—a set of ingenious, and perhaps politically informed, new readings of texts, but readings that are ultimately ungrounded, arbitrary, and shallow (Nelson 1991).[4] Sociologist Michael Schudson makes a similar point through a careful and serious analysis of what he takes as a paradigmatic text in American cultural studies: Donna Haraway's "Teddy Bear Patriarchy," a study of the American Museum of Natural History in New York, specifically its African Hall (Schudson 1997; Haraway 1989). In particular, Schudson takes issue with Haraway's use of synecdochal conversion to link display, ideology, and politics, on the grounds that such links are not based on social-historical study or attention to actual viewing practices of museum visitors.

Schudson's general point is that contemporary cultural studies is "sociologically impoverished," to its detriment. Although he is not particularly devoted to the Birmingham tradition in his own work (in media studies), Schudson concludes by predicting that "the works of cultural studies that will last will be the sort that follow Williams and Hoggart and Thompson, in close attention to lived experience" (1997: 395). This invocation of the "founding fathers" of British cultural studies reminds us that despite the particular disciplinary affiliations of these writers (literature and history), Birmingham cultural studies was firmly grounded in sociology—in the texts of Weber, Marx, Mannheim, the symbolic interactionists, and other sociological and ethnographic traditions (see Hall 1980). Throughout its theoretical transformations—its continuing revisions of neo-Marxist thought through the work of Althusser, Gramsci, and the Frankfurt School, its radical rethinking of its critical and conceptual framework in response to feminism and ethnic studies, and its rapprochement with poststructuralism—"Birmingham" work retained its primary focus on the structures of social life.

Let me be clear, though, that I am emphatically *not* recommending a return to origins, or an uncritical resumption of a pre-critical sociology. The critique of the early Birmingham model from the point of view of poststructuralist theory, first made, famously, by Rosalind Coward in an article in *Screen* (Coward 1977), has been definitive. In short, a sociological model that takes categories of "class" and "gender" as unproblematically *given*, and that reads cultural activities and products as *expressions* of class (and other) positions, is revealed as fundamentally determinist and theoretically naïve. As Coward shows, cultural studies must address questions of representation, signification, and the nature of the subject if it is to deal adequately with its chosen field.[5] But this poststructuralist turn in cultural studies, which renders at least problematic any talk of "real" social relations, can be taken as opening the way to exactly the kind of cultural studies that Nelson, Schudson, and others have rejected: the interpretation of cultural practices undertaken without a grounding in identifiable social categories. Once we acknowledge that those social categories (class, race, gender, and so on) are themselves discursive constructs, historically changing articulations, and, ultimately, no more than heuristic devices in analysis (and, of course,

[4] Nelson describes this work as a "recycled" semiotics, which he equates with textualism; however, as Keith Moxey (1991) has pointed out, semiotics at its best is not merely a "textual" enterprise.

[5] See also Burgin 1996. Burgin reviews the development of cultural studies in Britain, and addresses particularly the turn to semiotics and psychoanalysis by those in the field.

in political mobilization), then where is that solidity of the social world on which a cultural studies that is *not* "purely textual" can depend?

In my view, this necessary rethinking of the sociological project does not translate into license for "wild interpretation." Indeed, in the past few years encouraging signs have appeared within the discipline of a determination to engage with critical theory in the humanities and in cultural studies. Two sociology journals have devoted special issues to the subject of postmodernism (*Sociological Theory* 1991; *Theory and Society* 1992). A series of conferences initiated at the University of California, Santa Barbara, in February 1997 by two sociologists (The Cultural Turn Conference) was designed explicitly to address the impact of cultural studies and theory in the humanities on "cultural sociology."[6] In Fall 1997, Blackwell published *From Sociology to Cultural Studies*, edited by sociologist Elizabeth Long, and sponsored by the Sociology of Culture Section of the American Sociological Association (Long 1997). Contributors include cultural studies scholars—Richard Johnson, Andrew Goodwin, Tricia Rose, George Lipsitz—as well as sociologists and anthropologists whose work is based in cultural studies—Herman Gray, George Marcus, Jon Cruz. Long's introduction reviews developments in British and American cultural studies and in critical theory in the humanities, as well as in the sociology of culture, and asserts her intention, with this volume, to facilitate the dialogue across these fields. Sociologist Steven Seidman proposes the "relativization" of sociology by its encounter with cultural studies (for him, primarily the Birmingham tradition, and including its own "semiotic turn" and its turn to psychoanalysis) (1997). Such a relativized sociology, in his opinion, would have a theory of the subject and of subjectivity, a critical-moral role that rejects the traditional sociological standpoint of value-neutrality, and, as a result, "more productive ways of handling problems or concerns which are considered important by some American sociologists, e.g., relating social structure and culture, meaning and power, agency and constraint, or articulating a stronger notion of culture" (Seidman 1997: 55). Other contributors take Elizabeth Long's invitation to contribute to the book as the opportunity to stress the other side of the relationship—cultural studies' need for a firmer sociological grounding. But of the 17 contributors, almost all of them, as Long points out in her introduction, have "minimized territorial bickering" (1997: 1), and have engaged seriously in the work at the intersection of sociology, the humanities, and cultural studies.[7]

These developments, though, are occurring on the margins of the discipline of sociology, and I am not especially optimistic about either a more extensive re-evaluation of the field or a more widespread enthusiasm among sociologists to engage in cross-disciplinary dialogue. I want to consider in particular two branches of sociology, both relevant to the study of culture, and each indifferent or hostile to cultural studies. Since between them these two fields account for most of the sociological work on culture, it is important to look closely at their practices and assumptions. The first is *the sociology of culture*, or the sociology of the arts. This subspecialization has gone from strength to strength in the past two decades, now constituting one of the largest sections in the American Sociological Association. At annual meetings, the Culture section regularly merits about five sessions and 15 roundtables, on the basis of membership numbers. It has a quarterly newsletter, which publishes short but often important articles, and it has embarked on a series of volumes, published by Blackwell, of which the book edited by Elizabeth Long is the second. This work is represented most strongly by the study of arts organizations and institutions, known since the mid-1970s as "the production-of-culture approach." Two special issues of journals appeared with that title in 1976 and 1978 (*American Behavioral Scientist* and *Social Research*). Although this is not the only model for the sociology of culture, I have chosen to discuss it, since it continues to be prominent in the field.[8] Moreover, its limitations are shared by most other work within the subdiscipline.

A typical study, for example, investigates publishers' decision-making criteria in two commercial publishing houses. Another looks at the role of the radio and record industries in relation to changes in the world of country music.[9] Other

[6] This initial conference is being followed up by further such conferences at UCSB, including organized exchanges on a conference Web site.

[7] See also two recent articles by Gregor McLennan (1998a, 1998b).

[8] See, for example, Peterson 1994.

[9] Essays by Walter W. Powell and Richard A. Peterson in *Social Research* (1978).

work has taken its departure from Howard Becker's classic essay, "Art as Collective Action" (1974), and is devoted, like that essay, to the investigation of the social relations of cultural production, though not necessarily within one institution—the roles of composer, performer, instrument-maker, bureaucrat, fund-raiser, and so on.[10] As I said earlier, most sociologists of culture and the arts base their work on pre-critical, sometimes positivistic, premises. The typical methodology is to select for analysis a specific arts organization (an opera company, an art school, a gallery) and identify its social hierarchies, its decision-making processes, and, often, the aesthetic outcomes of these extra-aesthetic factors (though it is rare that questions *of* aesthetics are permitted in this discourse, or indeed any discussion of works themselves).[11] But usually the institution is detached from both its social and its historical context, since the sociologist is dealing with the microsocial sphere. Ironically, the result is that this work is often both ahistorical and unsociological. The tenacious social-scientific commitment to "objectivity," even in qualitative (rather than quantitative) work, blocks such scholarship from addressing certain questions of interpretation, representation, and subjectivity.

It is instructive to compare contemporary work in museology, much of it founded on these very questions, with a recent special issue of a social science journal on the theme of "Museum Research."[12] Here are a couple of titles from the volume: "Art Museum Membership and Cultural Distinction: Relating Members' Perceptions of Prestige to Benefit Usage"; "The Effect of School-Based Arts Instruction on Attendance at Museums and the Performing Arts"; and "The Impact of Experiential Variables on Patterns of Museum Attendance." (It is striking, by the way, that even Bourdieu, whose influence may be detected in a couple of these titles, can be turned into a tool for empiricism—as if he were represented simply by the tables and correlations in *Distinction* [Bourdieu 1984]. The complex analysis of cultural taste [in terms of class, habitus, and cultural capital] and the social critique of the Kantian aesthetic that underlie his empirical work take second place to the enthusiasm for surveys, number-crunching, and what C. Wright Mills once denounced as "abstracted empiricism.") One of the more quantitative studies in the volume considers museum-goers' responses to 94 questions about their social, cultural, and political values and attitudes, using multiple classification analysis to explore the implications (DiMaggio 1996). Here it is not so much that the statistical model seems inappropriate to the subject-matter—after all, interesting correlations can be found that way—but rather that the categories of analysis are themselves untheorized.

The second area of sociology that foregrounds culture is sociological theory itself—that is, the theory, or theories, of society. Here in the past couple of years the term *cultural sociology* has become prominent. But this term, and its associated reference to "the cultural turn," has nothing at all to do with language, semiotics, or poststructuralism. It describes a sociological theory whose central focus is culture—here with the broader meaning of values, beliefs, ideas, and so on, and not (as in the sociology of culture) the arts in particular. Cultural sociology, then, might be the approach employed in other subspecialties—the sociology of law, the sociology of education, industrial sociology—which have nothing to do with culture in the narrower sense.[13]

The objective of these sociological theories is to emphasize the centrality of cultural aspects of everyday life, which proponents believe have been rendered secondary to economic, material, structural factors within the discipline. Several of these authors are fully aware of the tradition of cultural studies, but they either consider it intellectually inadequate or maintain that anything worthwhile to be found in cultural studies was done earlier (and usually better) by sociologists.[14] It is worth considering how *language*

[10] Becker 1974. The article was later expanded in his book *Art Worlds* (1982).

[11] I have written at greater length about these characteristics of U.S. sociology of culture. See, for example, Wolff 1993 [1981], Chapter 2.

[12] *Poetics: Journal of Empirical Research on Literature, the Media and the Arts* (1996).

[13] Indeed, one session at the 1997 ASA meetings was devoted to reviews of the "return to culture" in a number of subspecializations, under the general panel heading "The Return to Culture in American Sociology."

[14] Herman Gray also makes this point, in passing: "Professional mainstream theorists strongly identified with specialties like social theory and the sociology of culture hold fast to the claim that sociology long ago dealt with the issues and ques-

sometimes operates to stake a claim to such authority (at the same time making the implicit assumption that doing something first also means doing it *better*). Note the not-so-subtle adverbs and other indicators of priority in these examples. A short article in the ASA Culture Newsletter by Michele Lamont, past Chair of the ASA section on Culture, states:

> Of course, the relationship we have with cultural theory, and with theory more generally, is very different from that of academics working in Comparative Literature, English, or History departments. While sociological theory has *always* been at the center of our common enterprise, the interest of those scholars in "theory"—to say nothing of their interest in power, class, etc.—has developed from their *relatively recent* encounter with European texts (Foucault, Ricoeur, Derrida, and others). (Lamont 1992: 8; emphasis added)

And:

> We need to painstakingly explain the place of theory in our field, and how issues that are *being appropriated* by New Historicism, New Cultural History, Cultural Studies, and "Race Theory" have been conceptualized and studied empirically by sociologists. (Lamont 1992: 9; emphasis added)

Sociological theorist Jeffrey Alexander employs the term *cultural* to claim, using the same rhetorical device, that this is nothing new to sociology, but dates from the classical sociological tradition, particularly the work of Emile Durkheim and his followers: "Both as theory and empirical investigation, poststructuralism and semiotic investigations more generally can be seen as *elaborating* one of the pathways that Durkheim's later sociology opens up" (Alexander 1988: 6; emphasis added).[15] And another example is to be found in a collection of essays on Symbolic Interactionism. The book, incidentally, is titled *Symbolic Interactionism and Cultural Studies*, though nothing in it really has anything to do with either the Birmingham tradition or cultural studies work within the humanities in the United States. In their introduction, the editors say this:

> We use the term *cultural studies* to refer to the classically humanistic disciplines which have *lately* come to use their philosophical, literary, and historical approaches to study the social construction of meaning, and other topics *traditionally* of interest to symbolic interactionists. (McCall and Becker 1990: 4; emphasis added)

The sociological focus on the social construction of identity and of meaning does sound something like the project of a poststructuralist cultural studies. But the interest in social constructionism, as in work in the symbolic interactionist tradition, does not amount to the embrace of the radical rethinking mandated by poststructuralist and psychoanalytic theory, which exposes the constitutive role of culture and representation in the social world, as well as the discursive nature of social categories themselves. In addition, the "identity" understood in the Meadian tradition of symbolic interactionism is a socially variable, but psychically fixed entity, whose coordinates are the traditional sociological ones of social position and social role.

Although Jeffrey Alexander appropriates the term *cultural studies* for sociology, his views on Birmingham cultural studies are clear—and totally dismissive—in a review he co-wrote in 1993 of the *Cultural Studies* reader that came out of a major conference on cultural studies; actually, they are *immediately* clear in the title of the review, which is "The British are Coming . . . Again! The Hidden Agenda of 'Cultural Studies'" (Sherwood, Smith, and Alexander 1993). Like the symbolic interactionists, Alexander uses *cultural studies* to identify the type of sociological theory and sociological analysis he proposes.[16] In 1988, he edited *Durkheimian Sociology: Cultural Studies*. The book is premised on an argument spelled out in his introduction: that the later work of Durkheim—especially his work on religion—provides an excellent model for contemporary sociology, given its primary focus on symbolic process. Alexander claims that Durkheim turned to the study of religion "because he wanted to give cultural processes more theoretical autonomy" (1988: 2). He suggests that there are "parallels" with the work of Saussure, Lévi-Strauss,

tions that now appear under the sign of cultural studies" (1996: 210).

[15] See also Alexander and Smith 1993.

[16] He uses the term interchangeably, and therefore confusingly, with the term *cultural sociology*. See Alexander 1996: 1, 3–5.

Barthes, and Foucault, and that in some cases this is more than coincidence, but rather the unacknowledged influence of Durkheim. He goes on to review the work of certain sociologists, and some anthropologists, who have pursued Durkheim's later theory (Edward Shils, Robert Bellah, Victor Turner, Mary Douglas), and he outlines a project for a late-Durkheimian sociology, which he calls "cultural studies." But despite the names of structuralist and poststructuralist writers, this project is innocent of some of central theoretical insights of those writers. This is Alexander's formulation of such a sociology:

> [T]he major point of departure is *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, which functions as a model for explaining central processes in secular social life. The other shared emphases follow naturally from this. They concentrate, first, on what might be called motivated expressive behavior as compared with conscious strategic action. This emotionally charged action, moreover, is not seen psychologistically, but instead as the basis for ritualization. It is conceived as action organized by reference to symbolic patterns that actors—even if they have a hand in changing them—did not intentionally create. (Alexander 1988: 11)

The vocabulary here—"motivated expressive behavior," "the basis for ritualization," "action organized by reference to symbolic patterns"—reveals a fundamental conception of culture and society that is at the same time humanist, potentially mechanistic, and grounded in the sort of "layered" model of the social world which the crudest notions of base and superstructure once gave rise to. In fact, some of the essays in the book are extremely interesting and quite sophisticated.[17] But Alexander's theoretical formulae, and his conception of sociology as cultural studies, continue to operate with an understanding of discrete layers—the social/institutional and the cultural/symbolic.

I have spent some time discussing what has been called "the cultural turn" in sociology to try to identify the grounds for a possible rapprochement with cultural studies, which, as I argued earlier, needs to work within a sociological perspective. I have pointed out that the sociology *of* culture (the study of the arts) has, for the most part, little interest in the critical revision of its categories of analysis. Cultural sociology, or sociological theory which foregrounds culture, on the other hand, claims both to preempt cultural studies and to improve on it. This applies to both symbolic interactionism and late-Durkheimianism. But in doing so, it retains the fatal weaknesses produced by ignoring a central aspect of cultural studies—namely, a theory of representation. As Steven Seidman has put it, "American sociology, even today, has not made a semiotic turn" (1997: 43). And, in the words of Roger Silverstone, a British media studies scholar, "the sociology of culture still finds comfort in the modernist securities of classification both of approach and subject matter" (1994: 993). This means, among other things, that sociologists, while understanding the social construction of meaning and even of the social self, retain a concept of the subject as coherent, unified, and stable. It also means (and this is a point made by Seidman) that they renounce the moral-critical role of cultural studies, maintaining the traditional social-scientific conception of the scholar as objective and value-neutral. And, of course, it means that sociologists cannot (yet) grasp the discursive nature of social relations and institutions. Obviously sociology, even after the "cultural turn," will not do as a model for cultural studies.

In the context of this disciplinary intransigence, I base my hope for a growing dialogue between sociology and cultural studies on two things: first, what seems to me to be an increasing acknowledgment within cultural studies of the importance of ethnography, of the study of social processes and institutions, and of the understanding of those structural features of cultural life which the sociological imagination has the ability to illuminate; and second, the work of some sociologists, few and marginalized though they might be, who have extended their view and their conceptual frameworks in new engagements with critical theory. I am not asking literary critics or art historians to become sociologists, or, for that matter, sociologists to become cultural studies scholars. We will continue to have discipline-based interests and discipline-based training. But cultural studies, after all, has always been the cross-disciplinary

[17] For example, Eric Rothenbulher's study (1988) of mass strikes as ritual and interpretation, whose discussion of the symbolic meaning of such conflict has quite a bit in common with Birmingham work on subculture.

collaboration of interested scholars, and the body of work produced within that field is the product of those intellectual exchanges and influences. By now it is a cliché to say that cultural studies is not one thing—even that it cannot be defined. Stuart Hall, director of the Birmingham Centre throughout the decade of the 1970s, and still a major figure in the field, has said this (1992: 278; 1990: 11),[18] as have the editors of various volumes of essays on cultural studies (Grossberg et al. 1992: 3).[19] It is in the nature of cultural studies to proceed in symbiotic relationship with other disciplines. (I leave aside the question of whether or not cultural studies can itself be called a discipline.) And that relationship is, and has always been, an ad hoc affair.

This serendipitous nature of cultural studies, which I see as nothing but a great advantage, means the discipline continues to be an open venture. My hope, then, is that sociologists will increasingly participate in its conversations. Historians and anthropologists are already part of the collective project, but to date sociologists have, for the most part, refrained from taking part.[20] At the risk of sounding as though I *were*, after all, recommending a return to origins, I would point out the productive collaborations in Birmingham, which in the early years and still now have included sociologists. (In fact, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies a few years ago merged with the Department of Sociology at that University.) In the United States, such conversations would both guarantee the re-sociologizing of cultural studies and ensure the long-overdue theoretical development of sociology.

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[18] "Cultural studies has multiple discourses; it has a number of different histories. . . . It included many different kinds of work" (Hall 1992: 278). Also, "Cultural studies is not one thing, it has never been one thing" (Hall 1990: 11).

[19] For example: "[I]t is probably impossible to agree on any essential definition or unique narrative of cultural studies" (Grossberg et al., 1992: 3).

[20] The University of California, Santa Barbara, is one exception to this generalization.

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Notes from a Border Discipline: Has the Border Become the Center?

MARSHALL W. MEYER
Wharton School
University of Pennsylvania

I'm an organizational sociologist who teaches in a management school, which is an exciting and sometimes a challenging role. Teaching in a management school is exciting because schools of management have moved from the periphery to the center of the academic firmament and have become players in the business world as well. Bill Gates notwithstanding, the elite business schools, not the arts colleges, train the business elite. A further source of excitement is the emergence of the new economic sociology, which promises to reintegrate management research with the core concerns of sociology and the opportunity to apply some ideas from economic sociology in business settings—my recent work, for example, focuses on organizational performance. Teaching in a management school is also challenging for a sociologist because the