

The Sociology Department:

SOAP DISPENSER

Fall 2002-03

Contents

The Editor gets the First Word.....	1
Greetings from the Chair. <i>By Mark Granovetter.....</i>	2
What Happened to the Grad Student Culture? <i>By Simon Weffer.....</i>	3
Victor's Office. <i>By Victor Thompson.....</i>	4
How's it Going?: Announcements.....	6
Dear Faculty.....	6
Speaker Series Schedule.....	7
Crossword Puzzle <i>By Jennifer Van Stelle.....</i>	8

The Editor get's the First Word!

By Brian Colwell

Welcome to the Soap Dispenser: the official graduate student newsletter of the Stanford sociology department. I was elected editor in a tense departmental election in May 2002. My goal over the next year is to provide sociology graduate students, and secondarily faculty (sorry people, but you didn't vote), with a forum for light-hearted commentary and information.

After the election and the scandalous election night revelry, I began to rack my

brain over how I could serve you, the little people. A few minutes later while washing my hands in the second floor bathroom I was struck with a vision for the newsletter. In case you haven't had the pleasure of washing your hands in the building lately, the new soap dispensers provide pre-foamed, light and fluffy soap that made my routine (not compulsive thank you) hand washing a truly fantastic experience. Such a little improvement brought me a twinge of joy that, believe it or not, made me love this department that much more. Only at the department do I actually look forward to washing my hands. The life of a graduate student may not be rich in monetary rewards, but you can't beat the compensating differentials. Alas, I would model the newsletter along the same lines. One more, albeit small, reason to feel good about coming to work. Sort of a literary water-cooler.

In order to actualize this vision I would not bring the full force of my literary talents to bear in producing this newsletter. That would be to time consuming and as a family man and graduate student I've discovered that time is precious. Far too precious for me to re-allocate hours that can be better spent learning to countdown six decks in Reno. Instead I would both entertain my constituency and make them do the bulk of the work.

But how could I do this? After re-reading my well-worn copy of Machiavelli's "The Prince" I concluded that trickery and coercion might get me a slice of northern Italy, but it would not get this newsletter published on time. There was no way for me

to elevate myself as editor while doing little of the actual work. So I decided to sell my status cheap and delegate responsibility for the newsletter to others. Therefore I have recruited the considerable talents of Victor Thompson, Simon Weffer, Jennifer Van Stelle and others. They are the Condi Rice and Dick Cheney and Karl Rove to my George Bush. You don't have to like them (though you may), but you must at least acknowledge their substantial influence. I'm planning on a partial cabinet change for next issue, so if you are asked to write a piece, don't feel pressured. . . feel honored. Seriously, thanks to those who volunteered to help me out on this issue of the newsletter.

Moving on, let me address any potential criticisms/concerns about my approach:

1) **“Don't you think you could have pursued a more professional tone?”**

Sure. But, as some people would be pleased to hear, I have more pressing items on my agenda. Besides, would you really want to read such a thing?

2) **“Golly, nice paper and all, but I wish Victor Thompson would share a little wisdom with us”**

No problem. Inquire within.

3) **“Will this be a monthly, quarterly or what?”**

Quarterly. That would normally mean 4 per year. You will only see three.

4) **“Gee-Whiz Mr. Colwell. I don't really like your vision. How can I unsubscribe?”**

Too bad. You can't. I'm in control here. Actually, I will read all letters to the editor (pretty big of me, I know). If you got a criticism or suggestion, go ahead and either email me or put a note in my box. This is fly-by-wire, so any advice is appreciated.

Some final points:

For ease of reading (and since there are no advertisers to please) all contents are continued on successive pages.

I'm more a “producer” or “facilitator” rather than an “editor”. Typos are the fault of the author (or Microsoft). Authors are also responsible for the content under their name. Views are not necessarily those of the editor and definitely not the ASGS.

Greetings from the Chair!

By Mark Granovetter, Sociology Department Chair

Brian asked me to say a few words as your incoming chair. This chair business is new to me, so I am still trying to make some sense of it, probably my first mistake. You may wonder how I happened to take this position. It was actually my second choice, but

Mary swept in ahead of me for refrigerator cleanup, so I had to take the messier cleanup job. I am well qualified, however, since in my youth I was once fourth in the batting order, and more recently have performed beyond

expectations (i.e. didn't fall down) in our departmental softball games.

But in a less serious vein, let me mention some new opportunities, such as our COLLOQUIUM! One innovation this year is that we have set aside a time slot – Thursday from 12:30 to 2 – when no courses are offered in the department, so everyone can come to colloquia. Having the talks at a single time should make it easier for everyone to get used to coming, and make it harder to forget when they are scheduled. Our intrepid colloquium committee, consisting of Jen Van Stelle, Victor Thompson and Noah Mark, is lining up a terrific collection of speakers. *I hope that as many of you as possible will come to these, as it's really vital for us to get some idea what kind of research is happening outside our department, especially when it's different from what we do here.* Though the intellectual feast should be enough, we know that grad students are always hungry, so we are going to serve nice drinks and snacks that should help fill those few idle seconds when you are not processing ideas. (Faculty are allowed to eat these goodies also, though the competition may be too stiff for them.) Stay tuned for the full schedule.

We also have two new courtesy assistant professors this year, and you should

be aware of who they are, as they may be people whose courses and research you may want to look into, and whom you may want to consult about your own work. One is Prof. Michele Landis Dauber, who has joined the faculty of the Law School. Michele holds a Ph.D. in Sociology and a J.D. from Northwestern University. She has particular interests in law and social policy, and you can find out more about her at <http://www.law.stanford.edu/faculty/dauber/> Though it's difficult to cross-list law courses because of their different academic calendar, we hope that she will teach one course in Sociology beginning next year. New at the Graduate School of Business is Prof. Martin Ruef. Martin came to GSB from a faculty position at the University of North Carolina, but before that was a familiar figure here as he completed his Ph.D. in Sociology from our own department. He has strong interests and expertise in organizations and health care delivery, as well as entrepreneurship and other subjects. As the result of cultural lag, the best information on him can still be found at <http://www.unc.edu/~ruef/>.

So welcome to the 2002-2003 academic year, and to all the excitement that lies ahead.

What happened to the Grad Student Culture?

By Simon Weffer

In my time here, I've noticed a somewhat disturbing phenomena occur in this department: the grad student "culture" has disappeared. What do I mean by that? For the purpose of this article, I am defining "grad student culture" as the sustained large group interaction of graduate students across cohort in a given year. We have, in my opinion, gotten together on both a social and academic

level in large groups less and less over the past say 4 years. I would argue we are now more a collection of individuals, than a group of friends and colleagues.

Now, what is my evidence? I think in the past few years, it has been harder and harder to organize group functions. For example, the annual pub-crawl, which has been a tradition for almost 20 years, has had

its attendance dwindle. Last year, the first and second year cohorts, along with ONE advanced graduate student, participated. That's not just the actual bar hopping, but also the dinner before hand, and the informal get together at the Coffee House. Likewise, other social events have been few and far between, because of the difficulty of mobilizing people. Then there is ASGS, whose meetings have dwindled in attendance. Alternately, can anyone remember the last proposal defense party that was publicized and attended by members of the department? And in the academic venue, the speaker series has had extremely sparse attendance, and the attendance at job talks has likewise been meager.

The thing that really troubles me is that the social events have historically been the venue in which senior graduate students got to meet the newer students in an informal, non academic setting. These were great ways to develop friendships, as well as strong and weak ties—and in this department we all know the importance of weak ties!!

Let me make it clear, however, that it is not the ASGS, Social, and Speaker Series Chairs fault that attendance and activity have dwindled. These folks work hard to get the word out and be as accommodating as possible to schedules. I have served as both an ASGS and social committee chair, and I can tell you first hand, that many people have pledged to me that they would attend an event or meeting, and then only a handful follow through. These people tirelessly serve every year to try to enrich the life of the department.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not trying to romanticize "the way it used to be", and talk about the "good ol' days." It is not as if in the past we had huge Roman Bacchanals with all 50 or so of the grad students in attendance, that was eventually broken up by the Stanford/Palo Alto police. Nor were there workshops, seminars, and speakers where debates raged and found there way into the Chronicle of Higher Education. But it seemed that everyone not only knew each others work, but were in touch with peoples personal life.

In my opinion, a strong graduate student population is a place where ideas flow, debates rage, friendships are made, and fun is shared. After all, in the years to come, we are going to be the ones reading each other's applications for positions; we will be the ones editing and reviewing for AJS, ASR, SPQ and Social Forces; we will be the ones extending invitations for presentation at ASA or within our departments. Should not we then know more than just someone's name and face?

Why not start our strengthening of ties with the pub-crawl this week? We should all make an effort to stop by at least one of the events, and make it a point to reconnect with someone you haven't talked to in a while, and meet one of the new students. There is perhaps no better way to rebuild our grad student culture than over a glass of Coke, Coors, or Courvoisier.

Furthermore, what I would like to do (if our glorious editor would permit) is to get some of your feedback and establish a discourse about this, in the next issue (or over email). So feel free to drop me a line or knock on my door.

Victor's Office

By Victor Thompson

It's another year here on the Farm and we're all excited about getting on with those academic careers we set aside for a summer of contemplation and reflection. As we are herded into our various stalls that somewhere along the line came to be called offices, it is only a matter of time before we begin to fill them up with pile after pile ofwell...stall stuff, which reminds me of the days I spent cleaning horse stalls, and we all know what horses produce. So as we start another year, perhaps it is a good time to take a step back and talk about what it means to be a Stanford Sociology student.

First of all, it means we are students at a very prestigious University with lots of resources to throw at us, and a caliber of students and faculty unmatched by any other. In fact, I was just reading how geologists from Stanford have determined the age of the oldest known meteor impact on Earth. Knowing that a big rock hit the planet 4.47 billion years ago makes me sleep better at night. I also hear they are on the cutting edge of GPS development (For those of you without Cadillacs this refers to global positioning system). This technology alone has saved half the population of Palo Alto from starvation by keeping them from getting lost on their way to Andronicos or Whole Foods. And let's not forget the IQ test. Once again, thanks Stanford! There is no doubt that Stanford has the best of the best. Whether it be giant rocks or yuppie tracking devices we can take credit for some of the greatest ideas and inventions of time. But surely there must be more to being at Stanford than these things. So I set out on a tour of campus in a search for meaning.

With GPS in hand and a helmet in case rocks fell from the sky, I strapped on my sandals and hit the door. The first thing I noticed was that in the bathroom there was some new form of cleaning chemical in the soap dispenser. Foam! Or maybe it was shaving cream? But wait, I think it's also in

the women's bathroom. I guess it could still be shaving cream, but who cares. The real thing I wanted to know was how much foam was in there. So I pushed and pushed and pushed....and pushed for at least a half hour before I got tired. Sorry to say, but there is no answer to how much foam is in the soap dispensers. Oh well, due north out of the bathroom I headed, deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness.

Next stop on the way to apocalypse...Olives. Erghh, what a horrible idea! I hate olives. Still, in the name of the Stanford Sociology Newsletter I forced my way through that horrible smell of olives and Mediterranean ambience to discover what lurked in that dingy pit which I hear tell used to be some sort of Political Science sandwich factory. And then I saw it. Chocolate milk in the freezer! Now all of my wishes had come true, and that was all I needed to see of Olives to satisfy my thirst for meaning in there. I think Olives may be the only supplier of chocolate milk on campus. Forget the food, get the milk.

Off to the library where I would be sure to gain a better understanding of what it means to be a student here. I forgot my ID so they wouldn't let me in without filling out some thing online about how I was forever in debt to them for access to the library for seven days this year. Somebody told me you could steal books by throwing them out the window and going outside to pick them up after you left. That would explain why I can never find anything I need. I didn't want to steal any books but I did see a nice computer I liked so I threw it out the window. When I went outside I saw it piled up on the ground in pieces. Oh well. I'm not sure I found what I wanted in there anyways.

Ultimately, I don't think I found what I needed on my trip after all. I may need more time to explore what it means to be a student here. And Brian may not force me to write another story if I keep them coming out like

this. So, I sat there on my broken down, stolen library computer pondering what more I need to do to find meaning here on the Farm. I guess I'll have to keep searching for

meaning, and besides, I think Brian doesn't want much more than a page. Off to get some chocolate milk and brush up on my Conrad references.

How's it going?

The word on fellow graduate students

Chris Bourg has accepted a full-time job with the Stanford University Libraries as the Curator for the Social and Behavioral Sciences, starting September 1. She will be responsible for developing and managing the research collections and information media for Communication, Psychology and Sociology; and will serve as the library liaison to those 3 departments. She will also be responsible for coordinating the public service activities of the Social Science Resource Center of Green Library.

Paul Y. Chang's "The Rise of Minjung Protestantism in South Korea: Its Socio-Political Background" was accepted as a chapter for an edited volume titled "Christianity in Korea" (edited by Robert Buswell Jr. and Timothy S. Lee).

Also, his paper "Christian Praxis and Theology in the Yusin Era (1972-1979): Developing the Dialectical Understanding of Social Movements" was selected by the Association of the Sociology of Religion as the winner of their annual Robert McNamara Student Paper Competition.

Kjersten Bunker was a co-winner of the ASA Hacker-Mullins Award for best graduate student paper in the Sociology of Science, Technology, and Knowledge.

[My apologies for anyone, or anything not mentioned. Nothing personal. Need the Info. -Editor]

Dear Faculty. . .

Anonymous questions and anonymous answers.

If you have a question for the departmental faculty, just place it in my mailbox (Colwell). All questions and answers are screened and handled by the editor to ensure anonymity. FYI, I don't know who has asked or answered

these questions, so don't ask. We had three questions, and two responses this quarter.

Question 1. What is your post-graduate school advice for students who will combine

their work with extensive parenting responsibilities?

Combining work responsibilities with child responsibilities is never easy. Raising kids requires an investment of quality time, but making articles and writing books does also. Generally, the work and family can be combined without too much sacrifice. So, here's my advice. You and your partner need to have an arrangement that allows you to do your work. If your partner can't do much child care because he/she has a high power kind of job, then you (or your partner) need to pay for daycare or a nanny to free you up to do your work. If your partner wants to stay home with the kid, that's fine too- you'll go to the library to do some work (and come home to read the kid a story).

If your partner is also an academic and has neither time nor money, and if you're not independently wealthy, than you're in a bit of a pickle. If that's your situation, I would suggest putting off kids for a while.

The main advice I can offer is to talk with your partner a LOT about who in the relationship is going to be responsible for what, before you have kids (if possible). A PhD is a big time investment (I don't have to tell you that), so you want to be sure that you will have the chance to take full advantage of the career possibilities that the PhD offers. You don't want to be bitter about missed opportunities- that would detract from your parenting as well as from your career. It's not too hard to create an arrangement with your partner that would allow you to do your work and be a parent, but you have to be sure you have that arrangement in place before you make the leap into parenthood.

Question 2. Do you find your association with Stanford, and the prestigious impact it has when interacting with non-academics to be obnoxious, gratifying or both? Do you often hide your association with the University?

For the most part, I find the association gratifying. Because Stanford

excels in so many different sports, being employed by the university impresses a wide range of the populace, from the tennis fan to the basketball fan. On a more serious note, there are situations in which being from Stanford can be off-putting. I've said things like, "I'm a teacher" or "I'm a sociologist" when trying to build rapport with someone who might find a "Stanford professor" intimidating. Usually though, people are impressed- this is especially true the further one travels from Palo Alto, both socially and geographically

Fall 2002-2003 Speaker Series

The Department of Sociology will host the Fall Speaker Series in the Department of Sociology, Building 120, Room 21/59, in the basement.

When: Thursdays from 12:30-2:00

10/17—Jennifer Lee, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of California, Irvine.

Title: "Civility in the City: Blacks, Jews, and Koreans in Urban America"

10/24—Mark Suchman, University of Wisconsin, Madison

Tentative

10/31—Toshio Yamagishi, Hokkaido University

Title: "Maghribi Traders and Internet Traders: Inclusion and Exclusion as the Bases of Reputation Effect"

11/14—Eva Meyersson Milgrom, Visiting Associate Professor of Sociology

Title: "Complementarity, Influence Cost and Equity"

More information available online at:

<http://www.stanford.edu/dept/soc/speaker.htm>
or contact vthompo@stanford.edu