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**Gabriel Ignatow
(University of North Texas)**

COMMENTARY ON:

**Cultural Sociology and Other Disciplines: Interdisciplinarity in the
Cultural Sciences**

Diana Crane
University of Pennsylvania

Professor Crane's paper encourages us to take a fresh look at the "cultural sciences" as a whole. She argues, quite persuasively I think, that we should think of the cultural sciences as a cluster of disciplines and interdisciplinary fields that share much in common. Under this rubric she includes disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, history, and psychology, as well as interdisciplinary fields including cultural studies, feminist theory, material culture, science studies, and visual culture. Within these disciplines and fields there are disagreements and debates to be sure, but Professor Crane suggests that proponents of the various schools of thought are more unified than they may appear, and more unified than extant models of interdisciplinarity suggest, because they share familiarity with "free-floating paradigms" associated with major theorists such as Lévi-Strauss, Barthes, Foucault, Bourdieu, Lyotard, Baudrillard, Geertz, Latour, Adorno, Gramsci, and Habermas.

Professor Crane suggests that cultural sociologists "draw from the same pool of paradigms and models" as other disciplines and fields within the cultural sciences. I think she is right, but in a way that is more than a little problematic for cultural sociology (and perhaps for cultural psychology, cultural history, and cultural research in other established disciplines too). If cultural sociologists are familiar with the free-floating paradigms of cultural analysis associated with major, and mostly European, cultural theorists, I suspect this is because they encountered these theorists during their undergraduate years, and in non-sociology classes, since aside from Bourdieu, none of the theorists

Professor Crane mentions are sociologists. While some of these theorists may be taught in some advanced undergraduate sociology courses from time to time, this is likely the exception rather than the rule. And the same can be said of graduate sociology training, at least in the United States. Thus, we can hypothesize that cultural sociologists enter their discipline with very different backgrounds, and armed with a very different stock of cultural capital, from most future sociologists. Their backgrounds are more heavily weighted toward philosophy and the humanities, rather than sociology or other social science disciplines. As a consequence they will often have more in common intellectually with cultural anthropologists, philosophers, and humanities scholars than they do with sociologists of race, or the family, or work and occupations. It is no surprise then that cultural sociologists have at times defined themselves in opposition to more traditional forms of sociology (e.g. structuralist or Marxist sociology). At times they have even defined themselves in opposition to sociologists *of* culture whose theoretical and methodological commitments are seen as too closely tied to more traditional forms of sociology.

In the past twenty years or so, cultural sociology's extra-sociological intellectual environment has not changed all that much, at least insofar as cultural sociologists still often have more in common with cultural scholars from other disciplines than they do with most other sociologists. But within sociology, things have changed: the cultural turn has been successful, and ideas (of frames, codes, schemas, rituals, styles, repertoires, and so on) and methods of cultural analysis from cultural sociology and related fields have entered into mainstream sociology.

Towards the end of her paper Professor Crane suggests that it is likely that in the future, a field such as material culture, cultural geography, or another interdisciplinary field from a traditional discipline will emerge to replace cultural studies as the field that serves to integrate the cultural sciences across disciplines. She may be right, but as we consider interdisciplinary relations in the cultural sciences, we also may wish to consider the *basic identities* of cultural science disciplines such as cultural sociology *within* their home disciplines, when many of the ideas and methods they have generated have entered mainstream social science; when as a consequence they can no longer position themselves in opposition to dominant theoretical or methodological paradigms within their home disciplines; and when cultural scholars enter their disciplines with intellectual backgrounds quite different from those of their future departmental colleagues.