

From the Editor:
Theories and Praxes of Difference

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Is the praxis of identity any less problematic than the praxis of difference? Are identity and difference, similar to good and evil, really different from one another, or are they simply different sides of the same coin? Doesn't the need for difference rest on the need for identity and vice versa? Putting this argument in sociological language, is there much difference between the discourse of assimilation, the discourse of difference and the discourse of exclusion? The praxes of identify and difference, the theme of this issue of our journal, may end up reflecting simply different versions of similar existential questions.

On one hand we speak of globalization and a new order in the world community, on the other hand we try to destroy one another in the name of social, ethnic or religious identity. Are the New World Order and the New Globalization simply euphemisms for the old imperialism, domination and ethnocentrism? Who can help us find our way out of this confusing and contradictory rhetoric but Edward Said? Who can demystify our illusive position within the global politics but a man who is himself Out of Place? The papers in this issue all attempt to find their way through Said even when they try to bump against him. You may find out that as the authors attempt to sort out their scholarly arguments in a public forum, the point of their probe remains in their heart. Putting it in Gregory Bateson's words, their voyage of discovery all leads back to the self. And the self itself may be *Out of Place*.

We feel that you will like many of the very fine papers that are printed in this issue. They all raise important and timely questions that should elevate the present arid East-West ideological discourse to a higher level. Early versions of these papers were presented at a two day forum on social theory held at the University of Massachusetts Boston in April 2005. The theme of the conference was: Theories and Praxes of Difference: Revisiting Edward Said in the Age of New Globalizations. What you read in this issue are the revised versions of those presentations that our editorial referees have accepted for publication. To our conference participants who shared their ideas and passions with us and then let us share their ideas and passions with you, we are deeply grateful. We are also grateful to our keynote speakers: Professors Charles Lemert, Bruce Mazlish, Winston Langley and our former Chancellor Keith Motley. We specially thank Professor Behrooz Tamdgidi, the guest editor for this issue of the journal. He chaired the conference's program committee and did all of the editorial work for putting this fine collection of papers together.

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