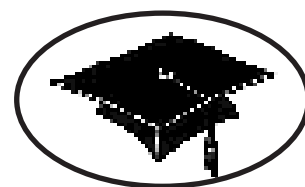

Berkeley Emeriti

TIMES



March 2009

Professor Barrie Thorne

Department of Sociology

“The 7-Up Documentary Film Series and
Different Ways of Inhabiting Time”

Saturday, March 14, 2009

The Faculty Club

Barrie Thorne joined the UC Berkeley faculty in 1995 as a Professor of Sociology and Women’s Studies after teaching at Michigan State University and the University of Southern California. Her work focuses on the sociology of gender, feminist theory, the sociology of age relations, childhood and families, and ethnographic methods. She is the U.S. editor of *Childhood: A Global Journal of Child Research* and the outgoing Chair of the American Sociological Association Section on the Sociology of Children and Youth. In 2002 she received the ASA Jessie Bernard Award in recognition of scholarly work that has enlarged the horizons of sociology to encompass the role of women in society. She has also received awards for teaching and mentoring. From 1997-2002 Barrie Thorne co-directed the Berkeley Center for Working Families, helping to build a feminist intellectual community focused on the themes of “cultures of care” and the changing contours of family life in the context of global economic restructuring. She is the author of *Gender Play: Girls and Boys in School* (Rutgers, 1993) and co-editor of *Feminist Sociology: Life Histories of a Movement* (Rutgers, 1997), *Rethinking the Family: Some Feminist Questions* (Northeastern University Press, 1992), *Language, Gender and Society* (Newbury House, 1983), and *Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance* (Newbury House, 1975). Barrie Thorne is currently writing a book, tentatively titled **Growing Up in Oakland**, based on three years of collaborative fieldwork and interviewing in a mixed-income, ethnically diverse area of the city.

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Berkeley Emeriti

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Published before each meeting of the UC Berkeley Emeriti Association: To provide closer networking for members with meeting announcements, meeting reviews, executive committee actions, pertinent campus news, and to reach out to members who cannot attend the meetings.

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ARE THERE CELLULOSIC BIOFUELS IN OUR FUTURE?

On Saturday, January 17, Chris Somerville, Director of the newly created Energy Biosciences Institute (EBI) presented a detailed description of national energy uses with particular attention to the significant carbon dioxide emissions from combustion of transportation fuels. An initiative from BP (formerly British Petroleum), backed by a promise of \$500 million over the next 10 years, led to the creation of the Institute that is located at Berkeley, LBNL, and the University of Illinois. Among the announced missions of EBI is to make transportation fuels (biofuels) from plant material.

The rationale for biofuels is that the carbon in the fuel does not come from fossil sources, as it does in coal or petroleum, but from carbon currently harvested from the atmosphere by growing plants. Even though these fuels cannot match the utility of petroleum, having lower energy content and inability to be transported in pipelines, their promise for helping to reduce atmospheric CO₂ accumulation makes investigation of their feasibility desirable.

Professor Somerville reviewed the current mixed record of biofuel production and use. In the central United States in recent years there has been a proliferation of ethanol factories, thanks to the political clout of corn farmers and the substitution of ethanol for MTBE as a gasoline additive. So much corn goes into this production that Iowa now imports corn. However, the energy used to grow, harvest, transport the grain, ferment and then transport the product exceeds energy yielded. The major factor in this inefficiency is that only a fraction of the corn plant is used, the grain, and of that only the sugar. Notwithstanding this inefficiency, Brazil currently claims that sugarcane ethanol supplies 40% of its automobile fuel. Professor Somerville dismissed biodiesel as an unpromising fuel because of the limited sources of material to input (vegetable oils and animal fats).

The major research task of EBI is to make ethanol from the cellulose of plants, a compound that makes up the bulk of their dry matter. Termites and cattle, unlike most animals, can digest cellulose, thanks to microbes in their digestive tracts. The plan is to sort through the host of these microbes, find the ones that make the cellulose-digesting enzymes, and assemble the genetic material for in-vitro production of the enzyme(s). Using these enzymes, cellulose can be made into ethanol.

A leading candidate for a carbon harvesting plant is Miscanthis, a grass closely related to corn and sugarcane. We were shown a spectacular crop of this plant growing in Illinois. Claims of production are impressive, and it is readily harvested while still standing as it dries in fall. Studies of land use indicate that there is abundant land previously cultivated to meet biofuel needs where the CO₂ from lost soil organic matter ("carbon debt") has already been paid. Corn stover, the non-grain part of corn, is mostly cellulose and so abundant that potentially it too could meet the biofuel needs of the US.

The interdisciplinary scope of EBI is impressive. We were shown plans to make coal-burning power plants cleaner by injecting the flue gas into deep porous formations displacing oil or water. This may enable greater oil

Continued on next page

... Cellulosic Biofuels

recovery from aging oil fields, as Professor Somerville explained, surely an interest of BP, but seemingly having little connection to biosciences.

In response to a question, Professor Somerville assured us that all discoveries will be publicly shared. However, this policy refers only to the “open component” of the UC-BP partnership. There is also a “closed component” (30% of the EBI funding) that places BP scientists in exclusive laboratories on campus “conducting confidential and proprietary research, the products of which will be owned by BP.” [Quotes from the UC press release highlighting the Master Agreement.]

This intimate relationship of a public university with a corporate giant puts at risk the university’s credibility as a disinterested source of expert information. BP is paying millions each year for the facilities and prestige of association with the University of California. Is this money worth the risk of lost credibility to UC?

Larry Waldron

A Sweeter Music, Sweet Peace Piece(s)

Those fortunate enough to have attended the November emeriti luncheon may remember that Sarah Cahill was to perform as a piano soloist for Cal Performances on January 25. If you’re interested to read the glowing review by Joshua Kosman, look on line for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Tuesday, January 27.

Go Green This Spring

There will be a free neighborhood plant-exchange, Saturday March 21, 12 – 4 pm, at 3811 Lakeshore Avenue in Oakland. Bonus: easy parking.

Do you have plants you must prune or divide? Would you want to donate these? contact www.plantxchange.wordpress.com or call Odette Pollar at 510/866-8482 before the event.

Recycle, trade, save, create an instant, new garden on a shoestring budget. Judging from past years’ successful events you may also find garden accessories: umbrellas, clippers, books on gardening, pots, tools, even koi and, of course, helpful volunteers. Last year more than 300 people participated. Swell the numbers this year!

OLLI’s Open House

OLLI spring semester instructors will present their courses. Ask questions or register for class on Tuesday, March 17, at the Berkeley City Club, 10 – 11:30 am. Call 510/642-9934 for reservations. Free refreshments.

Volunteer Opportunities

Friendship Line needs Volunteers!

The Friendship Line is a 24-hour phone line that reaches out to older adults, offering support, reassurance and counseling. Volunteers for the Friendship Line provide an ongoing connection for many depressed or lonely older adults. No experience is necessary. For more information, please contact Diane Nathaniel, 415/750-4180 x 236.

A Prompt for Prometheus

“...I never hear an old European accent in someone I just met without asking, ‘Do you play the violin?’...” More than string players are welcome at the Prometheus Symphony Orchestra; for more information on rehearsal venues and performances call Valerie Herr at 510/841-5892

Singular Speaking Events

Gary Snyder, world-renowned poet, essayist, environmentalist and Pulitzer Prize winner will be reading at “Lunch Poems presents” Thursday, March 5, at Morrison Room, 101 Doe Library, 12:10 – 12:50 pm.

A. B. Spellman, teacher of African-American studies, poetry and jazz at Emory, Rutgers and Harvard will read at the Holloway Poetry Series, Thursday March 5, at the Maude Fife Room, 315 Wheeler Hall, 6:30 – 8:30 pm.

Sauce for the Goose by Georges Feydeau, one of the great French playwrights of “La Belle Epoque”, may be seen at Zellerbach Playhouse on March 6, 7, 13, and 14 at 8 pm and March 8 and 15 at 2 pm. \$10.

Academy-award winning director Ang Lee and producer/screenwriter James Shamus will discuss their longtime collaboration and award-winning films. Monday, March 16 at Zellerbach Hall, starts 8 pm. \$5 discount.

Lust, Caution will be shown at Wheeler Auditorium on Tuesday, March 17, followed by a question and answer session with Ang Lee moderated by Professor Linda Williams. Price varies.

Red State, Blue State, Rich State, Poor State: Why Americans Vote the Way They Do, a lecture by Andrew Gelman, will focus on why Democrats win elections in wealthy states while Republicans get the votes of the wealthy. IGS Library, 109 Moses Hall, on Thursday, March 19, 4 – 6 pm.

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On-Campus Uncommon Campus Exhibits

Fiber & Dye Exhibit – Feel fabrics, see and smell dyes from 9 am – 4 pm, March 15 to April 5 at the UC Botanical Garden. Plants are the origin of most of the fibers we use in our daily lives and the dyes that provide us with colors. This around the world exhibit is free with admission to the Botanical Garden.

Greenwood Common: Uncommonly Modern: displayed every day until May 8, at Wurster Hall. This exhibition reveals the history of Greenwood Common, an enclave of eight distinct modernist houses, developed in the Berkeley hills between 1951 and 1957 by architect William W. Wurster.

A Breath of Air – Painting Exhibit: The Townsend Center is pleased to present Ala Ebtekar's striking diptych, 'A Breath of Air', display every day 9 am – 5 pm until May 25 at 20 Stephens Hall. Ebtekar, raised in Iran and a visiting lecturer at UC Berkeley and Stanford, received his art education in the Bay Area and is the recipient of the San Francisco Foundation's Murphy & Cadogan Fellowships in Art.

Galaxy: A Hundred or So Stars Visible to the Naked Eye: The Berkeley Art Museum presents this multimedia exhibit every Sunday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 11 am – 5 pm until August 30.

Animal Grossology – from Sylvia Branzel's best-selling children's series may be seen daily 10 am – 5 pm at the Lawrence Hall of Science until September 6. This series brings to life all the gritty and gross facts on some of nature's most "disgusting" critters.