

# Soap Dispenser

The Official Stanford Sociology Graduate Newsletter

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Winter quarter seems unfit to produce much Soap for a number of reasons. First, it's the shortest quarter (I'm too lazy to cite evidence, but if you find the contrary, let me know). Second, it's simply too soon to generate more news or advice. -- Yes, keep that golden Fall 2007 issue; the advice piece is supposed to be read for your whole tenure here as a grad student, not just a quarter. Third, the Editor's enthusiasm, after all, is not indefatigable, especially after a long holiday season. Last and not the least, we have the perpetual problem that everybody loves to read more than write.

## The Editor's Dilemma

by Yan Li

The Editor is facing a dilemma. She wonders if she should cancel the winter issue of the *Soap Dispenser*, or produce a one-page issue with just the **new** title "*Freeride Express*." Neither is happening of course. Instead, you have in your hand an unbearably light issue of the *Soap Dispenser*.

Luckily, the Editor does have a tiny circle of faithful friends/fans that she can call on in critical times like this. Mr. Mom, for example (see page 4). Other moms and dads (page 2). And mysterious people in this department with quirks you might never know... (page 3).

Okay, that pretty sums it up.

The Editor

## Call for Submissions

Want a fuller Soap Dispenser in the Spring? Write in!!!

Suggestions of topics:

- I know some of you have blogs. Donate one of your blog entry that's either informative, thought-provoking, entertaining, or simply expressive!
- Liked the "Who Am I" game? Send in your own random facts! Or someone else's. Who cares? You might find your soul mate within three floors inside this building!
- Overheard an interesting conversation with tangential sociological bearings? Share it with your fellow grad students!
- ... Really, anything that come to your mind. Your editor is truly out of ideas but she's more than happy to help promote yours!

Remember, **WE'LL PRINT ANYTHING!** Save your perfectionist inclinations for academic papers!

## Children of Sociologists

Part of the fun of being a sociologist is that you see sociology everywhere. In your kids, for example. Better yet, your kids might be becoming sociologists faster than you realize. Below I present stories and conversations by sociologist offspring that I extorted from their parents. See for yourself if they are malleable future sociologists.

### Obama or Hillary? *from Chunlei Wang*

A first grader, my daughter, Jackie, is apparently an undecided voter on the Democratic side. While driving her home from her afterschool, I asked her whom she would like to win the Democratic primaries. She said Obama. When asked why, she answered that it was because I, the dad, liked Obama. She inferred my preference from a copy of "Audacity of Hope" on my desk. However, a few days later, when primed with the same question, she told me that she wanted to support Hillary. Her reason was that there had never been a "girl president" in the United States. Here, the "identity theory" is a better predication of a voter's preference than the "expectation states theory".

### Mommy or Daddy? *from Stef Mollborn*

*Simon, 2 ½, trying to figure out gender and parenthood with his doll "Baby Henry."*

**Simon:** Baby Henry has an earache, a tummy-ache, and a fever. He needs a doctor, and he needs his mommy.

**Me:** Does he want me?

**Simon:** No, I'm his mommy.

**Me:** Are you his daddy?

**Simon:** No, I'm his mommy. [Brother] Benjamin is his daddy. You're his owner. Can you show me how to rock him and make him feel better? His mommy can make him feel better.

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*Benjamin, 4 ½, figuring out gender and parenthood in his own future:*

**Benjamin:** Mommy, I can never have kids.

**Me:** Why not? You can be a daddy someday if you want.

**Benjamin:** No, I can't, because babies grow in their mommies' tummies.

**Me:** Well, babies can't grow in their mommies' tummies unless the daddy helps them start to grow. [Hoping at this point that he doesn't ask about the mechanics of this...]

**Benjamin:** Yeah, but I still can't have a baby in my tummy.

**Me:** But you can have a baby once it comes out of its mommy's tummy. Then you can cuddle it and be its daddy.

**Benjamin:** Yeah, but I want to be its mommy and have it in my tummy.

### Human or Not? *from Dongtao Qi (translated by The Editor)*

*I was singing a children's song when Oliver, 3 ½, stopped me with a relentless critique.*

**Oliver:** You don't sing well, because you're not CD!

**Me:** Daddy's not a CD... What is Daddy then?

**Oliver:** [without thinking] You are human.

**Me:** Oh? And CD is not human?

**Oliver:** [affirmatively] CD is not human.

**Me:** Is airplane human?

**Oliver:** Airplane is not human either.

**Me:** Is TV human?

**Oliver:** TV? No. [laughing at the obvious]

...

**Me:** Oliver, is Big Bad Wolf human or not?

**Oliver:** [affirmatively] Big bad wolf is human.

**Me:** And Little White Bunny?

**Oliver:** Little White Bunny is human, too. Little Monkey is human, too. Little Chicken is human, too.

**Me:** Why are they all human?

**Oliver:** Because they all walk with legs!

**Me:** Oliver, is robot human?

**Oliver:** Robot? Yes!

### Tag or I Spy? *from Victor Simpson*

Adventures of Drake and Dobblefox

A Story by Justice Balabuszko, 5 ½

Drake and Dobblefox were walking in the woods. Suddenly they stopped at a path of footprints. They followed it and it led to some foxes and dragons. Then they played together, and then they all wanted to play tag, and then they all wanted to play I Spy.

The End.

More submissions of "children's sociology" welcome for the next issue! In addition, here's a new topic that one of you suggested: share what your parents' interpretation of sociology and/or a PhD in sociology is.

~ Mr. Mom's Column (Valentine's Special) ~

**Breaking the story of what people really want in a mate**

by "Mr. Mom"

Keeping in form with my dreams of being a *Cosmo* writer, I wanted to write an article on the question of beauty and what we desire in our relationships. As much as you might think this topic is just a pop story and has no social bearings, much of our society is based on these desires, from what clothes we wear, to how our own body image is molded.

If you read most surveys (done by *Cosmo* and like others – I am not sure what sound sociological research reports), they tend to be consistent as to what we prioritize in our mate. Men have quite simplistic views, usually wanting an attractive partner. Women, though, have more complex opinions, prioritizing a partner's job security, sense of humor, some looks, etc. But are these surveys accurate? Or do we just want a really hot guy who's six feet tall and has muscles or a woman with large breasts and Tresemme hair. I have never heard friends laugh at CarrotTop or the late great Chris Farley and follow up with comments such as "I want him bad" or "those jokes make me aroused". Jimmy Fallon maybe, but not Horatio Sanz.

So, I went further into people's decision-making process and looked at the internet. Now, don't become disgruntled simply because I follow *Cosmo* research methods - sometimes a layman approach can at least get you thinking about the topic. I was astounded (not really, but it sounds more exciting that way) that women looking for men are really picky about their mate's attractiveness. So what I found was, almost all women desire tall guys who are in shape, have a good income, and are confident. All that crap my mummy said when I went through puberty about

being myself to appear attractive went straight out the window. Yes, there was a small population of women that wrote about love, a love based on intimacy, communication, and sharing a life with each other.

What surprised me is that among men looking for women, more than I expected contradicted my stereotypes and wrote of wanting complex relationships with someone they love who enjoys sharing activities and a long life together. Yes, a lot of men described a relationship similar to a male order bride catalog, but many did not.

Honestly, I think this is a load of crap. I actually think men are still shallow and secretly care a lot about looks, they just have become hesitant to publicly express their opinions due to social pressures - similar to how people in America act towards race. Honestly, though, I think both men and women want complexity, they just want that encased inside Brad Pitt or Selma Hayek. Still, I think the best path to take on relationships is to not write on the internet your desires, which immediately discriminate against a large population of people, but meet people in real life. Create social networks through creative activities that require one to mingle with others. With that method, our perspective of beauty is complex, we like someone because of the way their eyes look, or how they make us laugh, how they like to go antiquing in Vermont with you, or watch Charlie Brown Christmas every year. Ok, this is just what I like, but still. Just be creative in your choices for a mate, because you're going to have to stay with them for the rest of your life. And remember, this article is written by someone who wants to write for *Cosmo*, not *The New Yorker*.

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Comments, ideas, request?

Email your \*lonely\* editor! - liy (at) stanford (dot) edu

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