

# Culture

Section of the American Sociological Association

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## From the Chair Ann Swidler, UC-Berkeley

“Practices” and “practice theory” have become central concepts (and potent buzz words) in the contemporary sociology of culture. I want to ask whether practices are a distinctive kind of culture that has different kinds of consequences than the cultural stuff we normally think of as “ideas,” “beliefs,” or “discourses.”

The focus on “practices” was stimulated by Raymond Williams (1973) who urged that, since works of art were produced and acquired their meaning through concrete social practices, the distinction between a material base and a cultural superstructure could not be maintained. This focus intensified with the very different projects of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu. Foucault (1965; 1977; 1978; 1983) showed how the practices of institutions—their routines for categorizing, excluding, labeling, diagnosing, confining, and curing—constitute categories of persons and define their traits. At the same time, disciplinary knowledge describes (and thus brings into being) new “sites” of power (like the “unconscious” or “neuroses” or genetic defects), which then become the basis for new institutional routines. So conceptual knowledge

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## Cultural Theory: Defining Core Controversies

*Editor's Note: This symposium is based on a Culture Section session held at last summer's ASA meeting. It includes condensed versions of papers by Alexander, Meyer et al., and Friedland, and a commentary by Swidler.*

### Cultural Sociology or Sociology of Culture? Towards a Strong Program

Jeffrey C. Alexander, UCLA

Over the last decade, as “culture” has doggedly pushed its way back onto the center stage of sociological study and debate, there has been anything but consensus among sociologists specializing in this area about what this concept means and, indeed, how it relates to our discipline as traditionally understood.

One way of describing this conflict is to say that it is an argument over whether this pursuit should be called the “sociology of culture” or “cultural sociology.” I wish to argue for the latter approach.

Sociology must always have a cultural dimension. Every action, no matter how instrumental and reflexive vis-a-vis its

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## Culture Takes a Bite of the Big Apple . . .

## on Saturday, August 17

This year the program chair, Bob Wuthnow, has planned a full and exciting schedule of sessions. These will be supplemented by our always ab fab party—tentatively scheduled for 6:30 pm Saturday in the Culture Section suite (reserved in Ann Swidler's name)—research network meetings, and a lively section membership meeting (at 11:30 am Saturday).

The sessions (detailed on the back cover) include “New Perspectives on the Study of Culture”; “Culture and Gender”; and “Material Culture,” co-sponsored with the Section on Science, Knowledge, and Technology. There will be two sessions on movements and culture, co-sponsored with the Section on Collective Behavior and Social Movements, and then a follow-up meeting organized by the Theory and Culture network, to continue the dialogue begun at these sessions.

All the research networks will meet in NYC, providing opportunities to exchange ideas and plug into the wide range of network activities carried on between meetings (e-mail con-

ferences, gatherings at regional association meetings, etc.). A list of the networks and their coordinators is found in the “Network News” story on pages 12–13; get in touch with the contact people for more information.

Late information on the party, network meetings, and other events will be sent electronically in July via *Culture Online*. If you haven't received it previously, make sure you are on the mailing list by sending your e-mail address to Rita Melendez ([rita.melendez@yale.edu](mailto:rita.melendez@yale.edu)). All information, including last minute arrangements, will also be posted on the Culture Section web site, so check this site (<http://pantheon.cis.yale.edu/~rmelende/culture.online.html>) before making travel plans and again just before you leave for NYC.

There are also non-section-sponsored events of interest to culturalists, including a mini-conference at the New School on August 15, sessions on culture and identity, and the sessions sponsored by the ASA religion section. Some of these are described in “Cultural Events Beyond the Section” (page 15).

Detailed listings of Culture Section sessions are found on the back cover; of Roundtables, on page 14. For *Books of Note*, see page 10; *Section and Network News*, page 12; *Cultural Events Beyond the Section* (including other convention events), page 15.

## From the Chair (continued from page 1)

organizes practices, and institutional practices make ideas real by enacting them. Bourdieu (1977) has used “practice” in a somewhat different sense—to accentuate the active role social agents play in reproducing structures. The meaning of the term “practice” in Bourdieu nonetheless overlaps with Foucault and Williams in referring to habitual routines, styles, and skills—unspoken and largely unconscious (or “misrecognized,” in Bourdieu’s terms).

The old focus of the sociology of culture—how ideas and values influence individual actors—has split into a focus on supra-individual discourses and on deeply embedded, but largely inarticulate, practices. Even “linguistic practices” are important not for the direct meanings they convey through language, but for the extra-linguistic meanings they carry via the habits, skills, and styles of their carriers—from code switching, to dominance gestures, to patterns of interruptions.

If culture consists of discourses and practices, do discourse and practice have different kinds of effects? There are some important new insights to be gained by looking at the causal claims recent analysts have made for practices.

These fall under two headings:

### *Practices as Semiotic Systems*

Cultural practices (here I mean routinized, habitual patterns of action) can serve as semiotic systems, conveying complex social meanings as people ring slight changes on habitual patterns, indirectly conveying information that would be difficult to convey directly. Examples might be routinized practices of greeting or gift giving, slight variations in which can express increases or decreases in social affiliation, mutual trust, or social attachment. Bourdieu’s analysis of gift exchange in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977) emphasizes this use of practices to convey messages (insults, one-up or one-downmanship), as does Caplow’s (1982; 1984) analysis of Christmas gift-giving in Middletown, or Goffman’s (1967) analyses of practices of public self-presentation. But why do these analysts focus on inarticulate practices, rather than on what is said in words? Or rather, if practices largely exist to convey meanings, how do those meanings differ from the ways people convey information through language? One difference, of course, is that words are cheap—I can tell everyone that I love him or her, but I can give the most expensive gift only to the most important person on my list. Inviting someone to dinner requires more effort and signals more interest than friendly-sounding words.

Practices may also be more ambiguous than words (though see Biernacki’s contrary argument below). I can turn down someone’s invitation to dinner and leave it unclear whether I am avoiding the person or am simply too busy. Dating practices, invitations, and so forth allow everyone to save face even while important social meanings are communicated. Third, and this seems to be what fascinates Bourdieu, the fact that practices are “silent” adds to their legitimating

power. It is hard to challenge what one cannot see or speak. Practices operate as a kind of false consciousness, precisely because they are not conscious at all. It is not what the actor means to say, but what she or he unwittingly conveys to others that matters.

### *Practices as Reality Defining*

The second way practices appear to have a special kind of causal power is that some practices enact “constitutive rules” (see D’Andrade 1984). The classic example of a “constitutive” practice is the performative utterance of saying “I do” in a wedding ceremony. These words aren’t a description of marriage, or thoughts or feelings about marriage. In a society with the appropriate legal institutions, saying “I do,” in front of a legally authorized person, with the proper paperwork completed, is getting married. These practices are what make one married.

More challenging to our usual ways of thinking about culture are practices that are not part of some legal institution like marriage, but that nonetheless constitute realities. Foucault has focused on institutional practices like “confinement” connected to elaborate discourses—those he calls Power/Knowledge. More provocative is Rick Biernacki’s description in *The Fabrication of Labor* (1995) of the ways “silent practices” constituted labor as a commodity in nineteenth-century England vs. Germany. He argues that the practices of negotiating piece rates—based on the quality and length of cloth in England and on the quantity of labor power in Germany—constituted labor differently as a commodity in the two countries. “The cultural definition of labor as a commodity was communicated and reproduced, not through ideal symbols as such, but through the hallowed form of unobtrusive practices” (p. 36). German employers paid workers by “shot,” the number of times the shuttle went across the loom, while the British paid by “picks,” the number of threads in a length of cloth. Biernacki argues that the words, pick and shot, were ambiguous. They “could pertain either to the shuttles’ motion [and thus the worker’s labor power] or to the product, the woven weft.” But practice, enacted in “the operation of the piece-rate scales,” made “the choice of referent . . . unmistakable. Verbal utterances were multivocal, the silent language of production—the piece rate mechanism—invariable” (p. 50).

Both Biernacki’s detailed analyses and his larger historical argument suggest that the differing German and British ways of constituting labor as a commodity persisted, forming the basis for different kinds of discourses about labor, but themselves remaining unexamined and essentially unexamined until government intervention in wage setting disrupted the piece-rate practices themselves.

Biernacki’s argument raises in radical (perhaps too radical) form the question of whether practices operate differently from discursive elements in encoding and transmitting cultural meanings. However unsettling to our usual ways of thinking about culture, this work suggests that more careful specification of what we mean by “practices” and closer analysis of how cultural practices differ in their operation from

other cultural elements may advance our understanding of how culture works.

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## Culture: Core Controversies

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external environments, is imbedded in a horizon of meaning (an internal environment) in relationship to which it can be neither instrumental nor reflexive. Every institution, no matter how technical, coercive, or seemingly impersonal, can only be effective if related to patterned sets of symbols that instruct it to become so and to an audience that "reads" it in a technical, coercive, and impersonal way. For this reason, every specialized subfield of sociology must have a cultural dimension; if not, the very workings of action arenas and institutional fields will never be fully understood.

To speak of the "sociology of culture" suggests exactly the opposite point of view. From this point of view, culture is viewed as something to be explained . . . by something else, something that is itself entirely separated from the domain of meaning. If we allow this separate thing to be called "sociology," then we define our field as the study of substructures, bases,

morphologies, "real" things, and "hard" variables, and we reduce structured sets of meanings to superstructures, ideologies, sentiments, "unreal" ideas and "soft" dependent variables.

This will not do. Sociology cannot be the study merely of contexts (the "with" texts); it must also be the study of texts. I do not mean, as the ethnomethodological critique of "normative sociology" would have it, simply formal or written texts. I mean, much more, unwritten scripts, the codes and narratives whose hidden but omnipresent power Paul Ricoeur suggested in his influential argument that "meaningful actions must be *considered* as texts"; if they are not, the meaning-full dimension of action cannot be objectified in a manner that allows it to be submitted to sociological study.

Husserl argued that the phenomenological study of the structures of consciousness can begin only when the *givenness* of the objectivity of "reality" is bracketed, for only in this way can the constituting power of individual consciousness—transcendental subjectivity—be studied as a dimension in itself. The same kind of bracketing operation must operate in cultural sociology: the con-texts of meaning must be bracketed in the hermeneutical moment of analysis. Actions and institutions must be treated "as if" they were structured *only* by scripts. Our first job as cultural sociologists is to discover, through the interpretive act, what these informing codes and narratives are. Only when we have discovered these "structures of culture" can we move beyond the hermeneutical moment to analytical moments of a more traditional institutional or action-oriented kind. In these other moments, we place texts *into* their con-texts—the environments of lifetexts that are structured by emotional life, by the influence of other actors and institutions, and by the exercise of agency and reflexivity vis-a-vis culture structures themselves.

Why do we have to engage in this hermeneutical moment? Why do we have to pretend, for the sake of analysis, that action—whether individual, collective, or institutional—must be treated as meaning-full in the sense that it is oriented by a coded and narrated text? Here we are in the realm of presuppositions, of what social scientists take for granted as common sense about action and order. For to enter into the hermeneutical moment requires a "leap of faith." You either "see" meaning or you don't.

For those who are not culturally unmusical (apologies to Weber) it is obvious that meaning is central to human existence, that the evaluation of the goodness and badness of objects (codes) and the arrangement of experiences into a coherent and chronological teleology (narratives) reach deeply into the social, the emotional, and the metaphysical arenas of life. It is possible for actors to be "numb" to meaning, to deny that it exists, to portray themselves and their groups and institutions as predators and egoists, as machines. This numbness, however, does not negate the existence of meaning; it represents only the incapacity to *recognize* its existence.

For most of its history sociology, both as theory and method, has suffered from precisely this kind of numbness.

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In a schematic way, I would like to suggest how and why this insensibility came to be so pervasive in such a central discipline of the human studies.

Caught up in the ongoing crises of modernity, our classical founders believed that modernity emptied the world of meaning. Capitalism, industrialization, secularization, rationalization, anomie, egoism—these core processes were held to create confused and dominated individuals, to shatter the possibilities of a meaningful telos, to eliminate the ordering power of the sacred and profane.

The communist and fascist revolutionary upheavals that marked the first half of this century were premised on this fear that modernity eroded the possibility of meaning-full texts. In the calm that descended on the postwar period, particularly in the United States, it seemed to Talcott Parsons and his colleagues that modernity did not have to be understood in such a corrosive way. Yet, while Parsons theorized that “values” were central to actions and institutions, he did not explain the nature of values themselves. Instead of engaging in the hermeneutical reconstruction of codes and narratives, he and his functionalist colleagues observed action from the outside and *induced* the existence of guiding valuations, using categorical frameworks supposedly generated by functional necessity.

In America in the 1960s, when the conflictual and traumatic character of modernity returned, Parsonian theory gave way to micro theorizing about the radically contingent nature of action and to macro theories about the radically external nature of order. In opposition to the “culture” variable, we witnessed the rise of the “social” and the “individual.” Thinkers like Moore, Tilly, Collins, and Mann approached textured meanings only through their con-texts: “ideologies,” “repertoires,” and “networks” became the order of the day. For microsociology, Husserl, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Skinner, and Sartre supplied a complementary, anti-textual set of resources. Homans, Blumer, Goffman, and Garfinkel understood culture only as an environment of action in relation to which actors had a radical reflexivity.

In the 1960s, at the very same time that meaning-as-text was disappearing from American sociology, theories that focused on texts, sometimes even at the expense of their con-texts, began to have enormous influence on European social theory, particularly in France. Following Saussure, Jacobson, and what they called the socio-logics rather than the sociology of the later Durkheim and Mauss, thinkers like Levi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, and the early Michel Foucault created a revolution in the human sciences by insisting on the textuality of institutions and the discursive nature of social action.

In the post-1968 period, of course, European social theory “rediscovered” the loss of meaning-fullness that modernity seemed to demand. Althusser converted texts into ideological state apparatuses. Foucault conflated discourses with dominating power. Derrida disconnected readers/actors from

texts. Postmodernism followed in their wake, with its declaration that metanarratives were dead, that sign systems were empty simulacrum, that the interpretations of social texts were reflections of actors’ structural positions. In the French tradition of Bourdieu and the British theorizing of the Birmingham school, these con-texts revolved around class domination. In the America, these con-texts increasingly implied the determining influence of actors’ status positions, particularly the status of race and gender.

As the eighties turned into the nineties, we have seen the revival of “culture” in American sociology and the declining prestige of anti-cultural forms of macro and micro thought. Yet it is clear that the profound and debilitating ambivalence about meaning and modernity remains. The result has been that the various compromise formations I have described above have become translated into the various streams that compose the disciplinary approach to culture today. The “production of culture” position *assumes* the existence of texts—as objects to be manipulated—and devotes itself to analyzing the con-texts that determine their use. Neo-institutionalism, from DiMaggio and Meyer to historical-comparativists like Wuthnow, insists more on the pragmatic than on the meaning-oriented nature of action, considering social texts primarily as legitimating constraints on organizations. Action-oriented approaches to culture, like Swidler’s, emphasize reflexivity vis-a-vis texts and treat culture as only a contingently effective “variable.”

It becomes all the more important, then, to recognize that there has also emerged a current of work that gives to meaning-full texts a much more central place. These contemporary sociologists are the “children” of an earlier generation of culturalist thinkers—Geertz, Bellah, Douglas, Turner, and Sahlins foremost among them—who wrote against the grain of sixties and seventies reductionism.

These contemporary cultural sociologists can be understood as loosely inspired by a “neo” or “late” Durkheimian frame. Yet they have also drawn from very different theoretical traditions, not only from the cognitive sign analysis of structuralism and the linguistic turn but from symbolic anthropology and its insistence on the emotional and moral urgency of boundary mechanisms that maintain purity and deflect danger. Stimulated by literary theorists like Northrup Frye, Frederick Jameson, and Hayden White, and by Aristotelians like Ricoeur and MacIntyre, these writers have also become increasingly preoccupied with the role of narrativity and genre in institutions and everyday life. Among more established figures, one thinks here particularly of recent works by Viviana Zelizer, Michèle Lamont, William Gibson, Barry Schwartz, William Sewell Jr., Wendy Griswold, Robin Wagner-Pacifici, Margaret Somers, William Gibson, and Steven Seidman. Less well-known at this point but also significant is the work by younger sociologists like Philip Smith, Anne Kane, and Mustafa Emirbayer. I understand my own theoretical and interpretive studies of Watergate, technology, and civil society as fitting very much into this vein.

It is important to emphasize that, while meaning-full texts are central to this late Durkheimian tendency, con-texts are not ignored. Stratification, domination, exclusion, race, gender, and violence appear centrally in these studies. They are treated, however, not as forces unto themselves but as institutions and processes that refract cultural texts in a meaning-full way, and also as cultural metatexts themselves. Roger Friedland and Richard Hecht's recent *To Rule Jerusalem* provides perhaps a powerful example of the kind of intertwining of text and context, of power and culture, that I have in mind.

The work of these sociologists—and many others whom I have not mentioned—creates the possibility that the rapidly growing disciplinary focus on culture will lead to a genuinely cultural sociology. The alternative will be merely the addition of yet another subfield to the division of disciplinary labor, this one called the sociology of culture.

### **Institutional Versus Actor-Centered Theories of Culture: The Case of World Society**

*John W. Meyer, Stanford; John Boli, Emory; Francisco O. Ramirez, Stanford; George M. Thomas, Arizona*

Neo-institutional analysis views actors and their action as structured by cultural structures that are organized at broader collective levels than locally-situated actors. Models of individual, organizational, and nation-state actorhood exist at national and world levels. In our paper we use this perspective to shift attention from the expressive dimensions of culture considered in most theories to the cognitive cultural models that constitute actors: their boundaries, rules of sovereignty, purposes, control technologies and resources.

#### ***World Society as Culture***

These cultural structures are largely worldwide. Doctrines of the goals and means for national development, or the principles of human rights, structure actors and activities worldwide and are considered universally applicable. The power of world culture lies in the fact that the actor units it constructs claim and are given universalistic and rationalized status, making them subject to and implementers of general rules and models.

#### ***Cultural Content***

World society constitutes a complex set of subunits as actors. It defines, specifies, and supports the key features of the rationalized nation-state actor: sovereignty, boundaries, rational purposes (national and individual development), technologies (economic, educational, medical, and legal organization), appropriate resources, and control systems. Similarly, world society defines proper individual actors, as citizens of nation-states and as members of humanity at large, in terms of worldwide rights, opportunities, capacities, and obligations. World society also defines a wide variety of proper organizations, reflecting legitimated individual needs and choices and functional societal requirements (especially economic and political “needs”).

World culture consists of the rules and models—framed in functional or causal, instrumental theories—of the nature, operation, and integration of the nation-state, organization, and individual. Social-science models of actors reflect central elements of world culture and have themselves become centrally incorporated elements.

#### ***Forms of Operation***

World society is Tocquevillean in that the wider culture propagates models of sovereign actors partly through voluntaristic mimicry: actors posture as exemplary embodiments of this culture and actively copy others to attain or gain value. States and individuals associate in international organizations (IOs), which have grown exponentially, especially in rationalized sectors (science, medicine, industry, sports). The models and rules pursued are scientific and legal; global dynamics are characterized not by central bureaucratic control but by scientific and professional legitimations and by associational moral influence. Nation-states and organizations turn to each other and to IOs for advice. Epistemic communities in the sciences, professions, and technical areas are prominent and engage in a great deal of rationalized editing, resulting in many copies for which there is no obvious original. All of this contrasts sharply with a world of pure power and exchange. Successful codified models are not hoarded like bullion in Spanish galleons but proclaimed like the good news in Biblical texts.

#### ***Sources of Actorhood***

Our perspective makes culture more than a mere context within which internally complex natural actors operate. On the contrary, we assume that contemporary individuals, organizations, and nation-states “make sense” because of world-cultural blueprints.

#### ***Individuals***

Personhood is a culturally constructed category. What it means to be a person, the importance of being a person, and theories about persons vary over time and space. In rationalized world culture, the construction of the individual person posits highly valued boundedness, agency and ongoing reflexivity. This model is seen as universal and natural, even inevitable. Individuals must act, making rational choices about goals and the means to attain them and taking care to hide that their acting is enacting.

Individual rights are derived from worldwide cultural principles, morally obligating respect by organizations and nation-states. People are expected to think seriously about and take positive steps to improve themselves as persons, workers, and citizens, and there is a considerable amount of expertise available to them. Thus, in addition to human capital and human rights theories, theories of the management of the self throughout the life course emerge.

#### ***Organizations***

Organizations present themselves as autonomous bounded actors with considerable internal integration pro-

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(Meyer et al., continued)

vided by well-known cultural scripts. How else can one explain the continued use of concepts like organizational culture? From our perspective, though, organizations are less likely to be influenced by “their” culture than by the culture (models) of “their” organizational field. For example, global educational isomorphism would not be so much in evidence were local organizational cultures as potent as their proponents would have us believe.

Similar processes operate in organizational change. Standard principles of formal organization are introduced in many different sectors with great optimism that their implementation will lead to improved outputs. For example, the socializable individual is an organizational principle instituted across different types of organizations. Cultural validation of the individual’s capacity to learn relies on universal worldwide, not local, models of progress and development.

### *Nation-States*

World-cultural models have direct effects on nation-state policies and sweeping indirect effects via these policies. For example, the rights of individuals are grounded in world principles but only national legal and policy environments directly impinge on individuals and organizations with respect to, say, principles of equality or due process. Because national legal and policy environments are themselves highly contingent on world models of the nation-state, world culture’s effects at the local level are multiplied manyfold by states.

The nation-state as a world-validated project has been a central theme in the development of our theoretical perspective, and we cite many empirical studies of cross-national isomorphism: constitutional rights; state authority; women’s equality; economic, science, environmental, welfare, and population policies; record-keeping and statistics; education. This observed great uniformity is not comprehensible in the absence of pervasive world models.

### *Loose-Coupling*

We observe much decoupling between world models and their enactment in varied local arenas. Loose coupling arises not only from the lack of a single powerful authority to regulate the interpretation and use of cultural elements. It also arises from the abstract and model-like character of actor identities. But loose coupling does not imply the oft-made erroneous conclusion that culture does not matter. Rapid diffusion of exogenous models is bound to produce inconsistencies and disjunctures.

Rationalization is frequently promoted by claims that universal contents and forms are not universal in practice. Egalitarian principles are necessary for inequalities to be classified as inequities and become the object of protest; the result is further rationalization and diffusion.

### *Generative Tensions and Change*

Cultural processes of isomorphism do not yield homoge-

neous, conflict-free consensus. In our paper we discuss four generative tensions:

(1) Tensions of isomorphism: Uniformly defined actors competing for uniformly defined goals experience contradictions and conflict.

(2) Tensions between levels: Tensions and contradictions emerge between actors and their environments (e.g., nation-states and world society, state authority and human rights discourse, organizations and national law) and between types of actors and identities (states and individuals, states and nations).

(3) Contradictions within actors: Actors oriented to constitutive structures experience and work on internal inconsistencies and incoherence.

(4) Contradictions within world culture: These include such mutually reinforcing contradictions as freedom/equality, self-determination/nation-building, and mobilizing diversity (Robertson’s universal particularism). An especially dynamic contradiction is rationality/irrationality. Rationality results in the elaboration of individual subjectivity and expressiveness, and in the enthronement of the irrational as a source of meaning and liberation. New realms of the irrational are discovered and rationalized. Oppositional or alternative movements and models absorb elements of world culture as a precondition of their mobilization.

### *World Culture and the Production of “Culture”*

In closing, we argue that world-cultural prescriptions telling actors to develop agency and act upon it, coupled with the generative tensions, produce an explosion of “culture” in the narrow sense. Our examples include historical state sponsorship of the arts, the nature and spread of manners, and religion. Subjective expressiveness is not a postmodern condition but an integral part of the rationalizing project from the start. It spreads throughout the world along with a full panoply of cultural forms, from fan clubs to the novel.

### *Metatheoretical Excurses*

We include several sections that sketch how our theory differs paradigmatically from others. Here, we list a few major points:

We make few social psychological assumptions, the principal one being that people habitually orient themselves to collective reality. We problematize actor identity, locating its source and maintenance processes in trans-situational cultural structures.

Culture, in our formulation, is comprised of cognitive models of reality that are morally binding. Its evaluative aspects tend to be implicit in its cognitive dimension.

Constituted actors of all sorts interpret and enact cultural structures, usually implicitly, as a precondition of action (Goffman). Culture is not just a tool kit used to solve problems of action; it constitutes both actors and action.

Through action (interpretive enactment), actors establish identity (status, glory). Thus, Negara and potlatch are not types of political systems but aspects of all polities. Agency

and interest are historico-culturally specific badges of particular models of actorhood.

## Interested Meanings/Meaningful Interests

*Roger Friedland, UC-Santa Barbara*

I arrived in Jerusalem as a social topographer; I have come away a cultural sociologist (as reported in Friedland and Hecht 1996). The city forced me to jettison the notion that I could read interests and powers off a structural map. But in that my formation was dominated by neo-Marxism, where materialism was also a theory of value formation, I have wanted not to assert normative autonomy as the wellspring of human freedom, but to restore meaning to the social, to implicate culture and power in a historically contingent fashion. My first readings suggest that neither cultural sociology nor poststructuralist cultural studies are adequate to this task.

### *Means and Ends*

In cultural sociology, relations to means—space, time, bodies, objects, and words—specify interests. Relations to ends specify meanings. The ends are either exogenous or assumed. Culture is either transparent as ideology with respect to interests, instrumentalized as schema or routines to be applied in those circumstances where the means-end connection has been ruptured, or an illusion to be decoded in reference to interests derivable from one's relation to those means.

In poststructuralist cultural studies, means and ends have been collapsed through the category of discourse. Objects can only be constituted through unstable linguistic difference. Means are always meaningful, and thus have been stripped of their capacity to produce meanings in history. In this nonfoundational world, the organization of means expresses, indeed constitutes, historically variable subjects. Relation to means is a subjection that subjectifies, creating historically specific, non-essentialized human agents whose ends are coincident with the agents' relations to those means. The poststructuralist affirmation of difference, wherein presence is erased either in exchange for a differential and arbitrary string of signs, or as an unutterable outside, this iron cage whose bars hold by the way they objectify outside, as opposed to objectify inside, allows the importation of a new metaphysics. To replace alienated man, divorced from the means of production, we now have an anxious incumbent in a subject position, unconsciously terrified that its social identity is illusory, an unspeakable gap. Because differences are inherently hierarchical, the project cycles back either to a Weberian problematic of relations of domination where the hope, à la Laclau and Mouffe, is to align the various binary relations into a giant structuralist firecracker, or to pluralism, wherein the differences become incommensurable group identities. The conditions under which either may be possible elude us because these approaches do not enable us to explain the conditions for new signification, let alone their materialization.

If cultural sociology makes means meaningless, post-structuralist cultural studies makes them too meaningful and hence analytically useless, unable to explain actual transformations of meaning. If the first voids content to assure a social scientifically accountable process, the second presumes process to assure an interpretable content. The first finds culture in the failures of power; the second finds power in the successes of culture. We are in the midst of an often acerbic intellectual and political contest between cultural sociology and cultural studies. There is, however, I believe, a debilitating consensus between the two. In different ways, both have built their fortresses on a transhistorical foundation: power. The expressive, explosive contradictions of class have given way to the flat, lifeless binaries of domination. In consequence, the ends of human existence, what we live for or in, have either been extruded or eviscerated.

We are, as a result, faced with an unpalatable choice between a deculturalized power that strips social technique of its meaning and its institutional specificities or a culturalized power that makes social technique all too meaningful, enabling us to interpret institutions but unable to specify the conditions of their possibility, to study instituting. Neither can adequately study power. I do not know the way out, but I do know we have a problem to solve. The essay from which this is drawn considers the work of Bourdieu, Foucault, Hebdige, Swidler, Laclau and Mouffe, Hall, Haraway, Butler, and Latour. Given that I am addressing cultural sociologists, I want to try to show how this division between means and ends, interests and meanings, inflects an important theoretical essay by William Sewell, who has long grappled in his sociological historical studies with the materialist and interpretive divide.

### *Meaning and Materiality*

Sewell's recent article revises Giddens' duality of structure based on rules and resources. In Sewell's theory, rules refer to "cultural schemas": "society's fundamental tools of thought, but also the various recipes, scenarios, principles of action, and habitus of speech and gesture built up with these fundamental tools" (1992). Resources, in contrast, are objects and attributes of human beings that can be used to "enhance or maintain power" (1992:9). Schemas are virtual; resources are actual. Social structures conjoin the two.<sup>1</sup>

I, of course, agree with Sewell's definition of structure as the coupling of schema and resources. However, as his own discussion of the importance of schema in constituting the social power of resources suggests, it is not possible to delineate a concept of power with reference to the material world alone. Power, like structure, is known by the coupling of schema and resources. So not only does Sewell smuggle a particular end—power—into the definition of means, he deculturalizes it, locating it in the control of resources that can be specified independently of the institutional sites in which they are produced/known/allocated. Resources, Sewell argues, are known as resources by their capacity to "enhance or maintain power," which is known by control of resources.<sup>2</sup>

*(continued on page 8)*

(Friedland, continued)

The theory eats its tail. The social efficacy of the material world depends upon signification. Power is inside culture as much as the reverse.

One can see the problem when he distinguishes between two dimensions of structure: depth, a dimension of schema, and power, a dimension of resources. Deep structures are pervasive and unconscious. Powerful structures shift resources, typically creating inequities (“modest power concentrations,” “shifting resources toward some speakers and away from others” [1992:22–23]). With this duality in place, Sewell can argue that linguistic structure is deep, but relatively powerless, a “neutral medium of exchange” that is therefore not particularly relevant to the explication of social structures where resources are really involved. Not only is Sewell’s analysis based on the official language as opposed to the way it is deployed, but, as Bourdieu and others have pointed out, linguistic competence is a powerful distributive force in modern societies.<sup>3</sup> Materiality, and thus resources, are not exterior to language even in their constitution.<sup>4</sup> Language is not neutral but contains classifications/valuations that are productive of the things they denote; it authors particular kinds of subjects in so far as they come into existence by speaking an authorized language. Linguistic practices, including some of the most ordinary, are part of the infrastructure of power.

Conversely, Sewell can argue that most “state or political structures,” while having enormous resource consequences, are generally not taken for granted. Sewell is here talking about state centralization and coercion. “One might argue that state structures are relatively mutable precisely because the massiveness (power) and obviousness (lack of depth) of their resource effects make them natural targets for open struggles” (1992:24). In the examples, his criteria are regime changes—new party systems in the United States, revolutions in the Third World. I would argue that it is precisely the taken-for-granted centrality of the state in allocating resources and in the schemas of social life, and of the democratic state in particular, that make political contest so durable. Thus Sewell, in the very next paragraph, can talk about “some political structures with immense power implications that are nevertheless relatively deep, that become ‘second nature’ and are accepted by all (or nearly all) political actors as essentially power-neutral, taken-for-granted means to political ends.” These include the American constitution, the French public bureaucracy, and the English community legal structure. Sewell concludes: “Durability, then, would appear to be determined more by a structure’s depth than by its power” (1992:24). Sewell thus reintroduces the very duality he rejected, contradicting the whole point of the previous discussion of structure as the conjoining of schema and resources. It is precisely because these schema are materialized that they are powerful. Depth is the result of past materiality, a forgotten history that has been naturalized. The dis-

inction between depth and power alerts us to the attributes of institutionality and its decomposition, but it does not help us to explain them. It describes the problem, the joining and decoupling of schema and resources; it does not point a way towards explaining it.

Institutions conjointly constitute objects and subjects.<sup>5</sup> Although objects extend human capacities, objects and subjects are nonetheless objectified/subjectified in particular ways in different institutional sites or institutional configurations. Categorical binaries have institutional preconditions. Neither interests, powers, nor resources can be specified independently of the meanings that organize specific institutional and inter-institutional fields. There is no culturally free way to talk about means; they are always freighted with ends, the effects upon which make them both material and meaningful. Materiality is the way of producing meaning; meaning is the way of producing materiality. Materiality and meaning are not exterior to each other, as the conceptual divide between social and cultural systems, that between resource and structure, and perhaps the term “embedded” all imply.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>“If resources are effects of schemas,” he writes, “it is also true that schemas are effects of resources. If schemas are to be sustained or reproduced over time . . . they must be validated by the accumulation of resources that their enactment engenders. Schemas not empowered or regenerated by resources would eventually be abandoned and forgotten, just as resources without cultural schemas to direct their use would eventually dissipate and decay. Sets of schemas and resources may properly be said to constitute *structures* only when they mutually imply and sustain each other over time” (Sewell 1992:13).

<sup>2</sup>This comes out clearly in his definition of human resources: “. . . human resources are physical strength, dexterity, knowledge, and emotional commitments that can be used to enhance or maintain power, including knowledge of the means of gaining, retaining, controlling, and propagating either human or nonhuman resources” (Sewell 1992:9).

<sup>3</sup>“Ordinary language,” Bourdieu writes, “is not only an infinite store of palpable forms available for poetical or philosophical games, or as with the later Heidegger and his followers, for free associations in what Nietzsche called a *Begriffsdichtung*; it is also a reservoir of forms of apperception of the social world and of commonplace expressions, in which the principles which govern the vision of the social world common to an entire group are deposited . . . . The structure of class relations is only ever named and grasped through the forms of classification which, even in the case of those conveyed by ordinary language, are never independent of this structure (something forgotten by the ethnomethodologists and all the formalist analyses of these forms) . . . . [O]rdinary language, as the product of the accumulated labor of thought dominated by the relations of power between classes, and a fortiori scholarly language, as the product of fields dominated by the interests and values of the dominant classes, are in a way primary ideologies which lend themselves more ‘naturally’ to usages conforming to the values and interests of the dominant classes” (1991:147–48).

<sup>4</sup>“There is no reference to a pure body,” Judith Butler writes, “which is not at the same a further formation of that body” (1993:8–9, 67–69).

<sup>5</sup>That different forms of subject are differentially implicated in different institutional sites is something that is lost on cultural studies that center their work on group identities that can be read off bodies, race and gender in particular. Particular institutional settings invest/signify different differences differently. Thus homosexual men who want to bear arms traumatize the military, while homosexual women who want to birth and raise children traumatize the family. See Beth Schneider's study of the organization of public reaction to male and female homosexuality in the United States military, forthcoming.

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### Commentary

Ann Swidler, UC-Berkeley

Both the strengths and the limitations of these papers become evident if we ask what each is against. Alexander is against Philistines who deny the autonomy of cultural "meaning-fullness." He stands with the interpretivists in seeing all human actions and institutions as texts that can be read for the cultural meanings they embody. I agree, but I think he castigates a caricatured "straw-person" while failing to take up the real challenge—making progress from his own starting point.

Surely today those who deny culture's autonomy are not the real threat to a cultural sociology. If one accepts that all human activity—actors, actions, and institutions—can be understood as meaningful, then the difficult questions concern the relations among these meaningful texts. Scholars in the Geertzian tradition tend to assume a kind of generalizable cultural logic, which resonates across a whole cultural system. But what is the character of that cultural logic? Are there any principles according to which one part of a cultural system constrains or shapes other parts? Where can we expect continuities in the meanings that link cultural texts, and what accounts for discontinuities? If attention to the meaningfulness of human action is to be sustained, these more difficult questions will have to be addressed. Fighting old enemies is no longer adequate.

A similar critique might be made of the Meyer group. They have increasingly elaborated their argument that cognitively grounded institutionalized rules provide the recipes for constituting actors—including individuals, organizations, and states—assailing dyed-in-the-wool realists who think actors, or states, or organizations are primary realities). But they have extended the theory largely by colonizing other

fields within sociology, rather than by tackling the difficult questions their own perspective raises. Addressing these questions would require a serious examination of their notion of culture and how it operates.

Sometimes Meyer, Boli, Ramirez, and Thomas describe culture as fundamental constitutive rules that create the very units the system is composed of. At other times they focus not on rules that constitute actors, but on fashionable accoutrements actors use to legitimate themselves—like whether states sign human rights treaties or whether organizations adopt particular management innovations. But are constitutive rules and organizational fashions different kinds of culture that operate in different ways? Invoking ideas about culture without really thinking them through leaves the Meyer group unable to address important questions: whether the cultural system they describe actually has its own "logic" (for example, they imply that the elaborated modern nation state requires elaboration of an increasingly abstracted, exquisitely valuable individual. But why so?); whether there is some immanent direction of development in this cultural system (and whether that direction is "Western rationality" as they often imply); and whether it is necessarily a system that moves toward uniformity and isomorphism, or whether it, like other cultural systems, also produces continuing diversification, subcultures, and contradictions.

Friedland does not set up a superficial "straw" adversary, but in this abbreviated paper he tells us too little about his own contribution. His critique of the cultural studies preoccupation with "domination" as ultimately making power culturally contentless is persuasive and important. Friedland opposes totalizing theories that fuse culture and power as well as irrationalizing "post-modern" theories that make the link between culture and power impossible to grasp. He wants instead to examine the interaction of multiple institutional logics, each of which is cultural in its essence. It is in the interaction of multiple culturally driven logics that power and culture both make a difference, and neither is reducible to the other. Perhaps the overwhelming obviousness of the "culturalness" of social struggles in Jerusalem seems to make it unnecessary to interrogate what he means by culture, but here, too, understanding how institutional systems are culturally constituted, what a "cultural logic" is, and what it means to say that the cultural logics of different institutional systems have clashed seems necessary for real progress in cultural analysis.

One lesson for all of us is to stop building our own lines of theorizing by assailing external enemies, and instead to start grappling with the difficult questions that come out of our own conceptions of culture. If we stop exaggerating our theoretical differences for rhetorical advantage, we find that the theoretical difficulties we face have some common elements, even when theorists begin from very different starting points. □

Fischer, Claude, Michael Hout, Martin Jankowski, Samuel Lucas, Ann Swidler, and Kim Voss. *Inequality by Design: Cracking the Bell Curve Myth*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. This Berkeley team of authors reanalyzes the data Murray and Herrnstein used in their much-discussed book, *The Bell Curve*. The reanalysis shows that economic success depends more on social factors than on genetic endowment. Further, Fischer et al. show that the proponents of genetic explanations for inequality actually measure school learning, not some pre-social innate ability. They argue that public policies have contributed to making the United States the most unequal of advanced industrial nations and suggest policies that can reshape our societal destiny.

Fine, Gary Alan. *Kitchens*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Fine follows working class youths who are recruited from the fast-food world of golden arches into the world of up-scale if cramped, hot, and noisy restaurant kitchens to create works of great aesthetic value for people with money who eat them. Fleshing-out with cogent examples the observations of George Orwell and William Foote White, Fine shows how these cooks develop a language and routine activities to communicate their newly won culture of production.

Harrington C. Lee and Denise D. Bielby. *Soap Fans: Pursuing Pleasure and Making Meaning in Everyday Life*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. Interviews with soap opera viewers, actors, writers, producers, flack press writers, and fan club managers reveal the complex interplay of meanings given to the "plots and characters" that are at the center of this world. These fans are no "mass of passive TV consumers" but active connoisseurs.

Biernacki, Richard. *The Fabrication of Labor: Germany and Britain, 1640-1914*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Dispelling notions of technological determinism and essentialist definitions of social class conflict, Biernacki shows that national differences between Germany and England in the cultural definitions of labor-as-commodity structured daily shop practices and labor-management relations.

Maffesoli, Michel. *The Time of the Tribes: The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. This is a post-modern Durkheimian meditation on the sacred as seen in the many overlapping allegiances contemporary people experience.

Root, Maria P. P., editor. *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Most of the twenty-four articles illustrate the pride and frustrations that well up around the numerous racial-ethnic distinctions that are made in contemporary U.S. society. The quite explicit agenda illustrated in the first and final few articles is to lower such boundaries by building an explicit multiracial identity.

Vaughan, Diane. *The Challenger Launch Decision: Risky Technology, Culture, and Deviance at NASA*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Using heretofore unexamined primary sources, Vaughan constructs an ethnology based on the participants' view of ongoing events and their emerging work group culture that made the disaster more probable. In doing so, she shows how agency can inform new institutionalism.

Ferrell, Jeff and Clinton R. Sanders, editors. *Cultural Criminology*. Ithaca: Northeastern University Press. These thirteen articles neatly illustrate the contest over definitions of deviance and criminality in specific situations ranging from the media construction of criminality and justice to the commodification of biker style and deviance as seen in bluegrass music.

McCormack, Gavan. *The Emptiness of Japanese Affluence*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe. Drawing from three decades of teaching and writing in Japan, McCormack addresses the social and cultural issues confronting Japan in the wake of its head-long drive to affluence since World War Two.

Hull, Suzanne W. *Women According to Men: The World of Tudor-Stuart Women*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press. Based on guidebooks for women's behavior written by men in the Elizabethan era, Hull shows the lot of women when they had no property rights and were taught to be "chaste, silent, and obedient."

Apple, Michael W. *Cultural Politics and Education*. New York: Teachers College Press. Apple offers a compelling indictment of the current moves to integrate public schools into the corporate agenda, as well as current calls for a national curriculum, voucher plans, and the pressures on all sides to censor books. He believes these efforts will further increase stratification by class, race, and gender.

Pruter, Robert. *Doowop: The Chicago Scene*. Pruter shows the business world that ex-

ploited the African American a cappella street music of the 1950s by focusing on the independent record companies of Chicago.

Granger, Michelle. *Case Studies in Merchandising Apparel and Soft Goods*. Philadelphia: Fairchild Books. This text gives a good insight into the machinery of creating consumerism and managing fashion changes.

Kerckhoff, Alan C., editor. *Generating Social Stratification: Toward a New Research Agenda*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. This set of articles provides an excellent update on social class mobility studies.

Vidich, Arthur J., editor. *The New Middle Classes: Life Styles, Status Claims, and Political Orientations*. New York: New York University Press. This collection brings together in one place a number of the classic works on the formation of the managerial middle class and its lifestyle.

### *Six Strong Works from Aldine de Gruyter*

Domhoff, G. William. *State Autonomy or Class Dominance? Case Studies on Policy Making in America*. Using case studies drawn from the New Deal of the Great Depression and World War Two eras, Domhoff shows that corporate class interests rather than Federal Government policy were most important in shaping U.S. society in the second quarter of the twentieth century and since.

Farkas, George. *Human Capital or Cultural Capital? Ethnicity and Poverty Groups in an Urban School District*. Using a national data set, Farkas shows that for African-American and Hispanic students, as well as for students with poorly educated mothers, family linguistic culture plays an important role in explaining weak reading skills. Using an extensive study carried out in the Dallas school system, he shows how the initial deficits in cultural resources of African-Americans and Hispanics are compounded over the years of schooling, and, in contrast, how the strong initial reading skills of Asian students allow them to have school success far in excess of their Anglo compatriots. Farkas concludes by describing an affordable intervention program to bring low achievers up to grade level.

d'Anjou, Leo. *Social Movements and Cultural Change: The First Abolition Campaign Revisited*. d'Anjou uses the work of the Abolition Committee in Britain on changing the view of slavery and the slave trade to show how social movements produce and

change cultural meanings and thus set in motion major social changes.

Figert, Anne E. *Women and the Ownership of PMS: Structuring a Psychiatric Disorder*. Does PMS exist and is it a mental illness? Figert reviews the contests between scientists, mental health practitioners, and women over identifying PMS and defining its scope, its consequences, and its cure. Not concerned with finding “the one right answer,” she is concerned with the fights over defining the situation.

Lofland, John. *Social Movement Organizations: Guide to Research on Insurgent Realities*. Based on his extensive research experience with social movements and his review of the accumulated literature on social movement organizations (SMOs), Lofland details a set of research questions about SMOs and outlines the procedures for studying them and the situations in which these “insurgent realities” thrive.

Couch, Carl J. *Information Technologies and Social Orders*. This wide-ranging essay marshals numerous illustrations to show that each new information technology, from early systems of quantification to the printing press and contemporary information processing machines, has changed the view of the world and the human species' place in it.

### **Nine from Blackwell**

Kumar, Krishan. *From Post-Industrial to Post-Modern Society: New Theories of the Contemporary World*. Kumar assesses the claims of three alternative theories about contemporary post-industrial society: the idea of an information society, the idea of post-Fordism, and of post-modernity.

Hindess, Barry. *Discourses of Power: From Hobbes to Foucault*. Hindess compares and contrasts the ideas of power and government in the works of Hobbes and Foucault.

Cahoone, Lawrence, editor. *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology*. Cahoone has gathered together numerous statements about modernism and post-modernism beginning with Descartes and Rousseau and ending with Habermas and MacIntyre.

Soper, Kate. *What Is Nature? Culture, Politics and the Non-Human*. Soper shows that there is nothing in nature that is natural. She shows the consequences for debates about ecology and gender differences encoded in the way that nature has been defined.

Heelas, Paul, Scott Lask and Paul Morris, editors. *Detraditionalization*. The chapter authors express differing views on whether

detraditionalization is still taking place, as well as the relative importance of retraditionalization, tradition-maintenance, and tradition-construction.

Maltby, Richard. *Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction*. This is a useful introduction to the movie industry, its history, genres, politics, and criticism.

Osgerby, William. *British Youth Cultures: Since 1945*. This inventory ranges from the Soho mods to the New Age Travellers via skinheads, ravers, soulboys, etc. The changing fashionable explanations of these groups are also outlined.

Emler, Nicholas and Stephen Reicher. *Adolescence and Delinquency: The Collective Management of Reputation*. The authors argue that teen conduct is motivated primarily by the drive for reputation among their peers. The main question is therefore why so many teens pursue reputations in delinquency.

Humphries, Stephen. *Hooligans or Rebels: An Oral History of Working-Class Childhood and Youth*. Humphries shows that the main forms of rebellion expressed by working class youth—gang delinquency, hooliganism, vandalism, and classroom anarchy—are not products of contemporary society but rather have a long and compelling history.

### **APA Books: Psychology Meets Culture**

Lee, Yueh-Ting, editor. *Stereotype Accuracy*. While stereotypes have been characterized as negative and inaccurate, the authors of this anthology suggest that many stereotypes are accurate in some degree and explore group differences.

Kitayama, Shinobu, and Hazel Rose Markus, editors. *Emotion and Culture*. The authors suggest that emotions are not ‘hard-wired’ biological phenomena, but are shaped through, social, cultural, and linguistic processes. Culture thus penetrates deeply every component of emotion including its neurochemical elements.

Landrine, Hope, editor. *Bringing Cultural Diversity to Feminist Psychology*. The authors explore the blinders of standard middle-class Euro-American feminism and explore the potential of opening feminist research, methods, and concerns to the perspectives of diverse others.

Pennybaker, James W. *Emotion, Disclosure, and Health*. These authors explore the cathartic effects of talking and writing about traumatic events. They try to show why translating upsetting experiences into words promotes mental and physical health.

### **Westview's Five in Popular Culture**

Friedlander, Paul. *Rock and Roll: A Social History*. Its subtitle notwithstanding, Friedlander's analysis focuses knowledgeably on the ebb and flow of the various musical styles of rock.

Arnett, Jeffrey Jensen. *Metalheads: Heavy Metal Music and Adolescent Alienation*. Arnett shows how heavy metal theatrics and youth alienation feed on one another.

Banks, Jack. *Monopoly Television: MTV's Quest to Control the Music*. While the major record companies have had great difficulty dictating the amount of radio airplay for their new releases, Banks shows that the emergence of music television provided the perfect opportunity for the majors to control the merchandising of new product. They quickly learned that male views of sex and gender violence were the best draws on MTV and silenced the other themes of teen life.

Harrison, Taylor, Sarah Projansky, Kent A. Ono, Elyce Rae Helford. *Enterprise Zones: Critical Positions on Star Trek*. The authors seek to understand the view of society and of human relations imbedded in the six movies and 25 years of Star Trek on television.

Bird, S. Elizabeth, editor. *Dressing in Feathers: The Construction of the Indian in American Popular Culture*. The authors trace the evolution of the popular images of Native Americans over the past 150 years from the “savage” of penny-dreadful novels to the saintly victims of “Dances with Wolves.”

### **Bantam's Three on Ideology Busting and Building**

Bordewich, Fergus M. *Killing the White Man's Indian: Reinventing Native Americans at the End of the Twentieth Century*. Bordewich shows that the recent view of Native Americans as eternal victims, politically powerless and weakened by poverty and alcoholism yet proudly tied to the spiritual world of nature, is as much an artifact of Anglo projection as was the idea of savage redmen. Based on three years of research on reservations, he traces the complexities of contemporary Native American politics and government policies toward them.

Griffin, Susan. *The Eros of Everyday Life: Essays on Ecology, Gender and Society*. Griffin examines the essential nature and role of women and posits that the subordination of women in society is cognate with the ways that Western culture attempts to tame and subordinate nature.

(continued on page 12)

(Books of Note, from page 11)

Henry III, William A. *In Defense of Elitism*. Henry asserts that it is haplessly wrong to assert that everyone is pretty much alike, that self-fulfillment is more important than objective achievement, that everyone has something significant to contribute, that all cultures are equally worthwhile, that the just society would produce equal success across lines of race, class, and gender, and that the common "man" is generally correct.

### Popular Press

Hanson, Mary Ellen. *Go! Fight! Win!* Hanson focuses on the transformation of cheerleading from an informal element of

college football enthusiasm to a professional-commercial enterprise. In the process a symbol of youthful prestige, attractiveness, leadership, and popularity came to be seen as shallow boosterism and objectified sexuality with the coming of adult control and commercialization. The changes in cheerleading are seen to be a model of transforming a recreation into entertainment.

Cusic, Don. *Music in the Market*. Cusic provides a detailed overview of popular music as a business. Based on his own experience working in the music industry, Cusic follows the dictum: follow the money.

Inness, Sherrie A. *Intimate Communities: Representation and Social Transformation in*

*Women's College Fiction, 1895-1910*. Inness examines the wide range of literature on student life in women's colleges produced in the Progressive Era including the hundreds of college novels, popular periodical essays, and scientific treatises. In this period the public image of the college woman was transformed from that of a homely, sexless oddity, doomed to spinsterhood, to that of a vibrant, attractive, athletic woman who would eventually marry. Rather than signaling a "golden age" for autonomous women's education, these representations, Inness suggests, helped to perpetuate the gendered status quo.

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## Culture Section News

**Reminder: Culture Day in NYC is August 17 (Saturday)**

### Electronic Communication

If you did not receive *Culture Online*, which was sent by e-mail a few months ago, send a note with your e-mail address to [rita.melendez@yale.edu](mailto:rita.melendez@yale.edu). In addition, be sure to check out the Culture Section www page for late-breaking news (particularly about the meetings in NYC) at <http://pantheon.cis.yale.edu/~rmelende/culture.online.html>.

### Erratum

In mentioning some section member accomplishments in the Winter 1996 issue, we omitted a name: Rolf Meyersohn is one of the authors of the arts research reported in the *New York Times*.

### Possibilities for Exposure in the Newsletter

Future newsletter issues will contain an irregular column on news of section members. Has your book just made the *New York Times* bestseller list? Have you appeared with Geraldo? Successfully sued Harvard? Published in *The National Inquirer*? Or perhaps ascended to a chair at the Collège de France? All this and more will cheer your friends, mortify your competitors, and fascinate the rest of us. Send it in ([sahart@acsu.buffalo.edu](mailto:sahart@acsu.buffalo.edu)) and we may print it. (Freedom from censorship is not guaranteed in this column.) □

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## Network News

As mentioned on page 1, the networks will meet in NYC. Further information about when and where the meetings will take place will be mailed electronically in July and posted on our section home page (<http://pantheon.cis.yale.edu/~rmelende/culture.online.html>); feel free, in addition, to con-

tact the coordinators. Brief reports from three networks, and a list of coordinators, are found below.

### Theory and Culture

In March the Theory Network sponsored a panel at the Eastern Sociological Society meetings in Boston. Michelle Ollivier (Ottawa), Paul Lopes (Tufts), and Ron Jacobs (Rice), presented work on the theme of how cultural sociology is changing theories of social differentiation. During late spring and early summer, we will be discussing issues raised by these papers by e-mail. Members of the network can look forward to three quality papers that, taken together, move us onto new terrain. Until then, contact Lyn Spillman for more information.

The Theory Network will organize a get-together at the ASA meetings to discuss theoretical issues raised by the panels on Social Movements and Culture. Co-sponsored by the Culture Section, these important panels will bring together cultural sociologists who do work on social movements and social movement sociologists who have been struggling to bring a cultural analysis into their work. The panels promise to be lively, contentious, and instructive. The coordinators of the Theory Network of the Culture section believe a discussion afterwards will be fruitful, as many theoretical issues are sure to be raised. Please look for information shortly before (or at) the meetings as to when and where the Theory Network will meet. Contact Anne Kane for further information.

### History and Culture

The Culture and History Research Network is co-sponsoring several sessions at this year's Social Science History Association meetings in New Orleans (including two sessions on collective memory). We are also organizing a two-hour workshop on "The Role of Culture in Historical Explanation" at this year's ASA meetings in New York City. The workshop will be held in the Culture Suite at the conference hotel. If you would like to be included in this event please contact one of the coordinators listed above.

## Political Culture

The political culture network continues to grow and percolate new ideas for group projects. This past year we sponsored a lively e-mail conference on Margaret Somers' article about political culture in the July 1995 issue of *Sociological Theory*, "What's Political or Cultural about Political Culture and the Public Sphere? . . ." Network coordinators are planning a topic-of-the-month discussion forum to begin after ASA '96, in hopes of continuing the sometimes feisty, always engaged "virtual seminar" that we began this year. Topics for discussion might include questions such as: How should we use Gramsci's ideas without the Marxian "metaphysics"—or do we want some version of the Marxian grounding? Is Laclau and Mouffe's solution a good one? Or another example: How might we think of identity politics in the U.S. in relation to worldwide fundamentalisms? What frameworks are useful or not so useful for making comparisons here? Or perhaps: Why is the "Noam Chomsky" style of cultural analysis ("we're all being brainwashed," to put it very simply and bluntly) so popular outside of sociology of culture circles? What do we think of it? Does it help or hinder public debate, or some of both?

Our ongoing projects include an updated list of research interests amongst our membership—now grown to over 30—and a syllabus collection. Discussion has begun as well regarding a mini-conference of research that addresses political culture themes we explore over e-mail.

The network will meet at ASA. We will discuss/vote on topics for the ongoing e-mail discussion (distributed beforehand over e-mail), the mini-conference idea, and any other

projects that current or potential members would like the network to consider. We await your ideas! To join the network or find out more about our meeting in NYC or one of our projects, please contact one of the coordinators.

### Networks and Their Coordinators

*History & Culture:* John Mohr, UC–Santa Barbara, mohr@alishaw.ucsb.edu; Ewa Morawski, Penn, emorawsk@sas.upenn.edu

*Knowledge & Science:* David Brain, New College, brain@virtu.sar.usf.edu

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*Political Culture:* Paul Lichterman and Nina Eliasoph, UW–Madison, lichterm and eliasoph@ssc.wisc.edu; Andrea Press, Illinois, press@ux1.cso.uiuc.edu

*Meaning & Measurement:* Ann Swidler, UC–Berkeley, swidler@uclink2.berkeley.edu

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*Identity Construction:* Karen Cerulo, Rutgers, cerulo@rci.rutgers.edu □



### Section Leaders

Chair: Ann Swidler, UC–Berkeley, swidler@uclink2.berkeley.edu

Past chair: Michèle Lamont, Princeton, lamont@pucc.bitnet

Chair elect (and program chair): Robert Wuthnow, Princeton, wuthnow@princeton.edu

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## Convention Information— Culture Section Refereed Roundtables

Organizers: Paul Lichterman, UW–Madison;  
Connie McNeely, UC–Santa Barbara  
(Saturday, August 17, time TBA)

### 1. *Material Culture: Things and Meanings*

Things Amongst Themselves. Jacques Mourrain, UC–Irvine  
Playing with Things: How a Windsurfer Realizes Leisure. Tim Dant, Manchester Metropolitan  
God, Guts, and Guns: Gun Culture in America. Piper Purcell, University of Chicago

### 2. *Politics and Culture*

Art, Politics, and the Avant-Garde: The Case of Italian Futurism. Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, UC–Santa Barbara  
The Politics of Memory and Identity in Germany. Siobhan Kattago, New School  
Half the Story: The Uses of History in Jamaican Political Discourse. Anita M. Waters, Denison.

### 3. *Nation and Nationalism*

Resurrecting the Modernist Past: Mythic Solutions to Ukraine's Post-Colonial Identity Crisis. Alexandra Hrycak, Chicago  
Cultural Analysis of the 1980s' Public Discourse on Taiwanese National Identities. Duujian Tsai, Michigan

### 4. *Teaching and Studying "Generation X"*

Panel: Marc Flacks, UC–Santa Cruz; Todd Hechtman, Richard Flacks, and Scott Thomas, UC–Santa Barbara

### 5. *Education for Freedom: Opening a Civic Dialogue*

Panel: Mark D. Jacobs and Greg Guagnano, George Mason

### 6. *Culture and the Public Sphere*

Words over Water: Interests, Culture, and Public Discourse in a Major California Water Use Debate. Michael P. Moody, Princeton  
Cultural Dynamics in the Public Sphere: Towards a Theory of the Politics of Public Credibility. Agnes Ku, Hong Kong Polytechnic  
Arts Policy in Great Britain. Victoria D. Alexander, Harvard/Surrey

### 7. *Constructing Boundaries: Gender and Sexuality*

"It's Not Girls Against Boys. It's Cool People Against Assholes": Gender Maneuvering as a Form of Resistance in Alternative Hard-Rock. Mimi Schippers, UW–Madison  
On the Gendered Economy of Sexual Identity: Lesbian Feminist Constructions of Bisexual Femininity. Amber Ault, Beloit  
Structural Ritualization in the Dance Studio. Andrea Fisher Maril, Tulsa and J. David Knottnerus, Oklahoma State  
Defining Sexual Harassment Cross-Nationally. Abigail Cope Smith, Princeton

### 8. *Gender Images*

Gender Differentiation in Social Constructions of Success in Popular Magazines. Cristina Bodinger-deUriarte, CSU–LA  
Literary Representations of Egyptian Female Identity: An Evaluation of Intimate Writings. Dana Greene, Michigan  
Love and Theft Revisited: 1950's White Masculinity. Rebecca Wallin, Northwestern

### 9. *Testing Theses on Cultural Change and Modernity*

The Semantic of Obituary Notices as a Cultural Indicator of Processes of Secularization. Jürgen Gerhards, Leipzig  
Seesaws and Beyond: A Model for Analyzing Questions of Community and Individualism Using Survey Data. Deb Bardwick, UW–Madison

### 10. *Cultural Approaches to Social Movements*

Social Movement Organizations and Cultural Congestion: The Case of God's Love We Deliver. Courtney Bender, Princeton  
Resonance and Legitimacy: The Afrocentric Challenge to the Education Institution, 1980s–1990s. Amy Binder, Northwestern  
Family Values: The Construction of an Intellectual Movement. Wolfgang Walter, UC–Berkeley  
Communities of Memory and Public Commitment in Feminist Spirituality. Rebecca S. Krantz, UW–Madison

### 11. *Women: Crossing, Across, and Within Cultures*

The Muslim Motherhood: Traditions, Contradictions, and Gender in the Muslim Family. Gail E. Murphy-Geiss, Denver/Iliff School of Theology  
Girl vs. Womanhood: Exploring the Symbolic Boundaries of Femininity in Two Cultures. Rika Sakuma Sato, Princeton  
Filipina Correspondence Brides: Subjectivity Through the Lens of Opportunity and Constraint. Paulette Testa Haban, UC–Santa Barbara

### 12. *Postmodernism: Different Issues, Different Approaches*

The Rise of the Postmodern Left. Timothy M. Chester and Clasina B. Segura, Texas A&M  
The Weberian Ethic and the Spirit of Postmodernism: David Mamet's "Homicide" as Everyman's Guide. Paul Shapiro, FIT–SUNY

### 13. *Culture Producers and Consumers*

Narrative Constraint in Rating Records: A Sequence Analysis of Artists' Careers in ROLLING STONE Record Guide. Mark Schoenhals and Jeffrey Yasumoto, Chicago  
Market Constraints on Professionalizing Inquiry: The Cases of Literary Studies and Sociology. Mark A. Schneider, Southern Illinois

### 14. *Race, Ethnicity, and Sexuality: Reflections of Identity*

In Style: Music, Dress, Demeanor and White Adolescent Racial Identity. Pamela Perry, UC–Berkeley  
Culture and Identity: Expressions of American Indian and Alaskan Native Ethnic Identity in High School Yearbooks, 1950–1990. JoEllen Shively, Michigan

### 15. *Cultural Capital*

Being Cultured: Who Values It, and What Do They Mean by It? Lisa Pellerin, UNC–Chapel Hill  
A Gendered Formulation of Cultural Capital Theory . . . with Color Added. Jeffrey D. Lyons, Massachusetts–Amherst  
The Production of Status Through Consumption: A Comparative Analysis of Appeals to Automobile Ownership in French and American Print Media, 1955–1990. Steven Silver, Stanford  
Lifestyle and Tastes in the U.S.—Alternative Aspects of Social Stratification. Tally Katz-Gerro, UC–Berkeley

### 16. *Studying and Theorizing the Mass Media*

A Critical Assessment of Some of the Limits Found in Social Theories of the Mass Media. Ron Lembo, Amherst  
Violent, Aggressive, and Prosocial Content of Animated Cartoons, 1930 to the Present. Hugh Klein, Koba Associates; Kenneth S. Shiffman, Cable News Network; and Denise A. Welka, American University

### 17. *Public Sponsored Media*

The Public Impact of Sociology: Public Broadcasting and the Public Interest. Jerold M. Starr, West Virginia  
A Study of Public Television Culture. Irene Lin, Southern California

### 18. *The Culture of Physical Space*

Simmel in Cyberspace: Strangeness and Distance in Postmodern Communications. William Bogard, Whitman  
A Change in Plans: Changes in Floor Plans of the American House Since 1930 and How They Reflect an Ascendance of the Private Self. Kris McIlwaine, Arizona

## Cultural Events Beyond the Section

### *Miniconference in NYC on August 15 at the New School: Problematics of Culture*

The New School of Social Research is holding this conference, scheduled for the day before the ASA meetings begin and intended to address vital concerns of the university world and public life in civil society. Speakers will deal with attacks on culture in the public sphere and raise questions about culture as a sociological field, the pitfalls of its mainstreaming, and the purported abandonment of culture by important parts of the American public. Among the topics to be discussed are the standing of the NEA and the NEH in America and their relation to intellectual life and the arts today, multicultural debates, postmodernisms, and transformations of cultural creation and practice.

The morning panel, entitled "Culture/Multiculture," will feature Craig Calhoun, Marshall Berman, and Todd Gitlin. Judith Balfe, Joni Cherbo, and Rolf Meyersohn will speak in the afternoon session on "The Abandonment of Culture?" All sessions will be held at the New School. For information contact Vera Zollberg or Jeffrey Goldfarb, zollbergv or goldfarj@newschool.edu, phone 212/229-5737.

### *ASA Sessions of Interest to Culturalists*

In addition to our own program, check out the five sessions on culture and identity (organized by Matthew Lawson) and a session on religion and cultural pluralism (organized by Nancy Eiesland and sponsored by the ASA Section on Sociology of Religion). These are listed below.

#### *Culture & Identity: Selves in Western Culture-History*

Subject Crises and Subject Work: Historical Liens to Cultural Interpretation. Jon Cruz, UC-Santa Barbara.  
Statistics of the Street and Songs of the Open Road: Contesting 'Homelessness.' Teresa Gowan, UC-Berkeley.  
On the Cultural Relations of Identity and Difference: The Two Postmodernities. Robert Dunn, CSU-Hayward.  
Images of the Self 1900-1992: The Secular Transition from the Utilitarian to the Expressive Self. Marlis Buchmann and Manuel Eisner, Zurich.

#### *Culture & Identity: Tropes of Domination.*

Metaphors at Play on the U.S.-Mexico Border: Tropes of Sameness and Difference in the Narrative Identities of Juarenses and El Pasoans. Pablo Vila, UT-El Paso.  
Spatializing Identity: The Role of Space and Place in Identifying Self and Others in the Post-Unification Berlin Police. Andreas Glaeser, Harvard.

The Medici as Patrons of Art: A Discussion of Identity. Indermohan Virk and Katherine Giuffre, UNC-Chapel Hill.  
The Construction of an Imagined National Identity in Post-Communist Hungary and the Joseph Antall Cabinet. Sara Schatz, UCLA.

#### *Culture & Identity: Hegemony & Resistance*

A Culturalist Approach to Ethnic Nationalism. Laura Desfor Edles, Hawaii.  
National Identities and the Organization of the European Union. Antonio V. Menendez, Butler.  
Native Resistance and Cultural Identity in the Central Andes: Historical Perspectives. Nancy M. Claycomb, Texas A&M.  
'A Life that Does Not Exist': The Colonial Politics of Tragedy Among the Innu of Northern Labrador. Colin Samson, Essex.

#### *Culture & Identity: Identity-Formation in Small Groups*

Speculums and Small Groups: New Visions of Women's Bodies. Deborah A. Gerson, UC-Berkeley.  
Becoming Lesbian: Identity Work and the Performance of Sexuality. Arlene Stein, Oregon.  
The Social Environment of Identity Making. Michelle Wolkomir, North Carolina State.  
Strategies for Securing Identity as a Small Business Owner Through a Gendered Voluntary Association. Kimberly A. Reed, CUNY.  
Creativity, Identity, and Support: How Writers Use Support Groups. Livia Pohlman, Georgia Southern.

#### *Culture & Identity: Theoretical Perspectives*

The Sociality of Discursive Practice. Ron Lembo, Amherst.  
The Primacy of Identity in the Study of Culture. Todd A. Hechtman, UC-Santa Barbara.  
The Self and its Borders: Mead and Bakhtin on Language, Fragmentation and Normativity. Julie Ford, Long Island.  
Unity, Diversity, and the Representation of Culture. James F. Cosgrave, York.

#### *Religion and Cultural Pluralism*

What it Means to be Christian: The Role of Religion in the Construction of Ethnic Identity and Boundary Among Second Generation Korean-Americans. Kelly H. Chong, Chicago.  
Assimilation, Pluralism, and Transnationalism?: Migration's Transformation of Religious Life in Boston and the Dominican Republic. Peggy Levitt, Harvard.  
Religion, Feminism, and Professionalism: The Case of Rabbinical Advocates. Ronen Shamir, Tel Aviv.  
Dietary Laws in Judaism and Islam: Subtle Divergences in Cultural Mentalities. Samuel Z. Klausner, Penn.

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## Newsletter Submissions

*Culture* is the official newsletter for the Sociology of Culture Section of the American Sociological Association. All articles and columns are copyrighted by their authors. *Culture* is indexed in *Sociological Abstracts*.

*Deadline for Fall 1996 issue:* September 1. Unsolicited contributions are welcome; send by e-mail or on DOS disk. Preliminary inquiries prior to formal submission are a good idea. Submission of material to *Culture* constitutes permission for abstracting and indexing of one's material. The editor reserves the right to edit all submissions. See "Books of Note" for information on getting books covered. Address all other inquiries to the editor: Stephen Hart; Sociology Department; SUNY-Buffalo; Buffalo, NY 14260-4140; e-mail: sahart@acsu.buffalo.edu; phone and fax: 716/886-5592.

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## Convention Information—Culture Section Sessions

### *New Perspectives on the Study of Culture (Saturday at 2:30)*

Panelists: Michael M. Bell, Iowa State; Kathleen Karley, Carnegie-Mellon; Paul J. DiMaggio, Princeton; Charles Tilly, New School

Presider and Discussant: Harrison White, Columbia

Organizer: Robert Wuthnow, Princeton

### *Culture and Gender (Saturday at 12:30)*

The Musical Composition of Erotic Agency—Sonic Resources and Social-Sexual Action. Tia DeNora, Exeter

The Limits of Audience Power: Magazine Editors Account for the Persistence of Unrealistic Beauty Images Despite Criticism. Melissa A. Milkie, Maryland

Genesis and Transformation Within a Chicago “Girl Gang.” Sudhir A. Venkatesh, Chicago

Theatrical Transformation and Competing Visions of Manhood in Scottish Rite Masonry. Mary Ann Clawson, Wesleyan

Discussant: Richard Butsch, Rider

Organizer: Sharon Hays, Virginia

### *Culture and Social Movements (I) (Sunday at 10:30)*

Defeat “Frames” and Solidarity: Researching the Impact of Social Movement Culture. Kim Voss, UC–Berkeley

Grand Ambitions: Cultural Theory and Popular Protest. Francesca Polletta, Columbia

Theorizing Meaning Construction and Understanding Social Movements. Anne Kane, Texas–Austin

Discussants: William Gamson, Boston College; Stephen Hart, SUNY–Buffalo

Presider: Eric Rambo, UW–Milwaukee

Organizers: Stephen Hart, SUNY–Buffalo and Mary Jo Neitz, Missouri

### *Social Movements and Culture (II) (time & day TBA)*

Political Communication across Brazilian Youth Networks. Ann Mische, New School

Framing Strategies and Political Opportunities in the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia, 1989. John K. Glenn, III, Harvard

Neoinstitutionalism and Social Movement Research: Hierarchy and Autonomy in the Home Education Movements. Mitchell Stevens, Hamilton

Symbols, Positions, Objects: Situating “Culture” within Social Movement Theory. Mustafa Emirbayer, New School and Jeff Goodwin, New York University

Discussant: Carol Mueller, Arizona State West

Presider: Mary Jo Neitz, Missouri

Organizers: Mary Jo Neitz, Missouri and Stephen Hart, SUNY–Buffalo

### *Material Culture (Sunday at 8:30 am)*

Material Culture and Power: Demonstration and Representation in the Construction of Realities. Chandra Mukerji, UC–San Diego

Artifact and Assemblage: Notes on Knowing and Design. Charles Gordon, Carleton (Ottawa)

“It’s like you use pots and pans to cook. It’s the tool.” The technologies of safer sex. Lisa Jean Moore, UC–San Francisco

The Social Purpose of Chairs. Galen Cranz, UC–Berkeley

Collecting Memories into Social Knowledge of the African Burial Ground: The Work of Activism, the Academy, and the News Media. Susan C. Pearce, Gettysburg

Presider: David Brain, New College

Organizers: David Brain, New College; Peter Whalley, Loyola

*(Culture Section roundtables are listed on page 14.)*