

INTRODUCTION:

SOCIAL ISSUES IN THE STUDY OF CULTURE

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I

Cultural analysis figured prominently in the work of nearly all of the great founding theorists of sociology. A variety of distinguished works have been produced during the discipline's twentieth-century growth. Yet the study of culture has been strikingly marginalized in sociology, especially in the United States. Indeed, until very recently, most sociologists seemed to regard the study of culture as more appropriate to anthropologists. Residues of this attitude can be found in most American introductory sociology textbooks. Culture is compartmentalized as the topic of a single chapter, seldom mentioned elsewhere in the book. Religion, for example, is apt to be discussed with little or no reference to the concepts introduced in the culture chapter.¹ In such culture chapters, discussion is based largely on the work of Kroeber, Linton, Mead, and other anthropologists whose canonical works are those of anthropologists two or three generations past.² In most books there is no mention of Lévi-Strauss, let alone of Sahlins, Geertz, and other leading contemporary cultural anthropologists. Likewise, there is no mention of recent work in literary criticism, philosophy and history which ought to be seen as central to social studies of culture—for example, the writings of Foucault,

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Derrida, Lacan, Said, Jameson or others sometimes lumped together (a little misleadingly) under the label “post-modernists.”

Part of this is simply that textbooks are very slow to adjust their canonical treatments to intellectual changes in the discipline. And texts are also biased indicators because their authors are generally forced to avoid theoretical complexity. This tends to minimize not only the attention paid to the sort of thinkers noted above, but the seriousness with which contemporary sociology of culture is addressed. Few books on the market, for example, feature the work of Pierre Bourdieu in any serious way, fewer still mention Raymond Williams.³

Nonetheless, the textbooks do tell us something about the discipline. Especially in the United States, sociologists have worked with a tacit division of labor in mind which relegated the study of culture with a small “c” to anthropology, and with a capital “C” (or “K”) to specialists in literature, art, music, etc. The first part of this implicit notion of a division of labor was enshrined in Talcott Parsons’ division of the realm of human action into the three domains of personality, culture and society. In a way, this was ironic for Parsons since he came much closer to developing a genuine cultural sociology than did any other major American sociologist of his generation. In Parsons’ later work, especially, culture figures as central to the explanation of the continuity, coherence and change of the social system. In any case, Parsons meant for studies of personality, culture and society to be constantly interpenetrating (as they were in his own work). While he accepted a disciplinary division of labor, he sought to avoid the kind of separation and purported autonomy of psychology, anthropology and sociology which has become the norm.⁴ The second part seems to reflect a tacit assumption that the specifications of high culture were beyond sociological explanation, were simply matters of opinion or interpretation. In other words, sociologists bought (perhaps unconsciously and even in contradiction to what would have been their explicit, considered judgment) into one of the general self-understandings of modern Western culture, the ideology of artistic genius.⁵ Considering its prestige at one time, it is remarkable how little a mark has been left on contemporary sociology by Sorokin’s monumental attempt (1937-41) to explain overarching historical patterns of culture. It seems relegated, along with the efforts of Toynbee, Spengler, and Mumford, to some dark corner where we keep, without respect, the relics of grand historical syntheses. That Sorokin’s were sophisticated sociological analyses, not just syntheses, seems forgotten.

There may even have been deeper reasons for this sociological avoidance of the study of culture. To take culture very seriously might have meant an implicit challenge to the positivist self-understanding and the dominance of objectivist research techniques in sociology. Something of this was suggested in the debates over rationality and cross-cultural studies which followed the publication of Winch’s *The Idea of a Social Science* (1958; see B. Wilson 1970;

Hollis and Lukes 1982). An extreme emphasis on cultural particularity and the internal, self-referential nature of linguistic meaning seemed to rule out most of the very project of cross-cultural analysis.⁶ The majority of participants rejected such extreme conclusions, but never completely refuted the arguments on which they were based. Of course, the kind of analysis which Winch developed, following the late Wittgenstein, is not the only way of taking culture seriously. Anthropology offered both the *Kulturwissenschaft* tradition and the newer school of structuralism, for example, neither of which posed such intractable problems. Serious social studies of culture were undertaken by literary critics (e.g., Jameson 1981; Eagleton 1984), art critics (e.g., Gablik 1984), historians (Thompson 1955, 1968; Maravall 1986; among many). There were exemplars from the established fields of cultural studies, particularly in the humanities. And indeed, various sociologists had been taking culture seriously all along (though often not under that name).⁷

Talcott Parsons imposed a separation between sociological and cultural analysis which might be questioned, but he hardly ignored culture. On the other hand, he did tend, especially in his later work, to make culture into something of an overarching compendium of values, ideas, and orientations to action, a kind of general explanation for everything. This approach to culture did not encourage making it the focus of research so much as the most fundamental of independent variables. Nonetheless, some functionalists produced cultural studies which were much more concrete and historically specific than Parsons' own work (e.g., those of Eisenstadt 1973; Bellah 1964; Geertz 1973). And sociology offered other alternatives: Phenomenology had a long minority following and included distinguished students of culture (e.g., Berger and Luckmann 1966; Berger 1969). American sociologists under the influence of Weber (including especially a number of Gerth's students from Wisconsin) conducted a wide range of culturally focused research, including a good part of the community studies tradition (e.g., Vidich and Bensman 1968). Sociologists from Bell (1973, 1976) and Stanley (1978) to Riesman (1950), Slater (1970), and Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler and Tipton (1985) have offered cultural criticism of some note. Elias produced monumental historical analyses of cultural patterns and their change, though it took the revival of comparative historical sociology as well as of cultural sociology for them to become well-known in the United States. Marxist sociologists and those influenced by them kept a vital tradition of cultural analysis alive. Lukacs, though not formally a sociologist, wrote important analyses of literature; Goldman kept his legacy alive. Hauser's monumental *Sociology of Art* (1982) was an effort to bridge Marxist historical and sociological analysis, though it has had little impact in American sociology. The Frankfurt school produced a host of major studies of culture, including both institutional analyses and formal content-oriented critiques. The works of Adorno and Benjamin figure perhaps most prominently in this regard, but Horkheimer, Lowenthal, and

Marcuse all published significant studies. Indeed, it would not be too much to say that more important work on the sociology of culture was done within the Marxist discourse than within that of the sociological discipline proper.

The sociology of culture, thus, did not lack foundations on which to build. However, it remained a remarkably isolated subfield. It is hard to imagine a sociologist declaring studies of social structure to be simply one topical subfield among many, yet this attitude faced studies of culture and limited their impact on the discipline as a whole. "Mainstream" sociologists might follow Parsons in describing culture as a sort of general independent variable which exerted a determining force over social life "in the last instance," but they did not make it the object of their studies. The issue was less a shortage of theories raising issues of cultural analysis than the lack of a strong empirical research tradition closely linked both to those theories and to other problem areas in sociology. Some sociologists went out of their way to distinguish themselves from their "softer" brethren who took culture and interpretative research more seriously. Perhaps the efforts of Howard Becker, William Sewell, Sr. and others at Wisconsin to expunge the theoretical and cultural orientation of Gerth and establish an entirely positivist, quantitative sociology is the foremost example. Other factors also intervened. For example, the relationship between sociology and anthropology grew more distant during the 1960s as more and more anthropology departments broke off from previously joint departments in which they had been minority constituencies, and as overarching theoretical paradigms broke down in both fields. And the fact that most sociological studies were done in the researcher's own country made it easier to ignore the issue of cultural difference.

For whatever reasons, the sociology of culture became a small and not very active subfield, and thought about culture figured only very slightly or in very general ways in the most influential lines of sociological work. The substantial attention accorded cultural issues by many of the theoretical founders of modern sociology, from Comte through Parsons, was largely forgotten. Selective reading was powerful, especially when aided by a well-defined canon and a reliance on edited snippets and predigested summaries rather than serious primary source study. Two quick examples will suffice, since the aim here is only to be suggestive. First, Durkheim, arguably the most influential of all the founding figures, was for decades read almost unanimously as advocating a "pure sociology" which would be entirely objectivist and positivist, as foreign to problems of cultural interpretation as to individualistic psychology. This was plausible for the Durkheim of *The Rules of Sociological Method*, *Suicide*, and *The Division of Labor*, which figured centrally in the canon, but quite at odds with the Durkheim of *Primitive Classifications* and *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. An understanding of Durkheim's thought either in terms of its internal tensions or in terms of its development over his career had to be sacrificed in this treatment, as Jeffrey Alexander (1982) has recently

shown (see also Alexander 1988). Similarly, it remains possible for as sophisticated and important a theorist as Peter Blau (1986) to invoke Simmel as his unambiguous ally in opposing a purely structural sociology to cultural studies. This is because Simmel has been read (in sociology) almost entirely through certain small portions of his work, those focused on forms of social relationships, and especially on those forms which might be universal. Simmel's substantial inquiries into modern culture, like the more philosophical side of his intellectual work, have been largely ignored (see Frisby 1985).

One reason the development of a serious sociology of culture is so important today is because the reformulation of sociological theory depends in large part on a rethinking of the place of culture within it. This is central to the theoretical enterprises of Bourdieu, the foremost figure in the development of a reflexive sociology of practice, and of Giddens with his theory of structuration opposed to a division into theories of action and structure. Both attempt to overcome the dualisms typical of modern Western thought in general and sociological theory in particular. Cultural issues also figure prominently in the critique of rational action theory and in the rise of comparative historical sociology (Calhoun and Wacquant 1988). Indeed, cultural issues arise in nearly every serious project of comparative social research.

II

Be all this as it may, it is only background to the concerns of the present volume. During the 1960s and 1970s seeds were planted for a much richer sociology of culture. They include not only several exemplary pieces of research, but also some efforts to push at the limits (a) of the integration of the study of culture into sociology more broadly, and (b) of the disciplinary boundaries which separate cognate lines of inquiry in cultural studies. Even as the sociology of culture has grown (a fact witnessed by the creation of a thriving American Sociological Association section on culture in 1986), it has retained some of the biases inherent in previous sociological research. Thus culture is disproportionately likely to be treated externally, for example in terms of the various social factors influencing the production of different sorts of cultural objects, rather than internally, through some interpretation of meaning or analysis of relationships among features of culture. And the divide between the more theoretical debates on culture and the more empirical studies is as sharp as in most other branches of the field. I have tried, therefore, to include works both typical of the predominant trends and others in some tension with them.

One of the enduring motifs of sociological studies of culture is a contrast between high culture and popular culture. Indeed, the very relationship between these supposedly distinct realms has been the object of study of some of the

pioneers of modern, research-oriented, sociology of culture, including Leo Lowenthal (1961), Herbert Gans (1974) and Pierre Bourdieu (1984). Gans describes the existence of a number of "taste cultures" associated with different class positions, and Bourdieu shows how certain more general factors, like an opposition between embodiment and abstraction, work to mark positions in a cultural status hierarchy, including the reversals of tastes which distinguish different fragments of a single common class.⁸

Sociological attention has been drawn quite disproportionately to the "popular culture" end of the continuum. Again, this seems to reflect a tacit assumption that mass audience works are somehow more amenable to sociological analysis than elite culture. But the theoretical status of this assumption and of the simple divide between popular or mass culture and high or elite culture has been thrown into considerable doubt (McCabe 1986; Caughie 1986). Moreover, sociologists have begun increasingly to examine high cultural products. In this they follow the lead of literary criticism which has introduced a substantial sociological element into its analyses in recent years (although less under the influence of any sociologists than of various Marxist and structuralist, and "post-Marxist" and "post-structuralist," literary theorists). Lamont (1987) has in fact remarked on the careerist advantages of taking on the theoretical analysis of high-status literary work; true though this may be for "becoming a famous French philosopher," it is not yet a proven path for becoming a famous American sociologist, though that may be just on the horizon.

Perhaps the single most sustained effort to reduce the split between sociology and literary (and other cultural) studies has come from someone not trained in sociology, the late Raymond Williams (1958, 1961, 1973, 1981). In a variety of contexts, Williams explored the social conditions for literary and other cultural productivity, the role of literature as a form of incipient sociology and social criticism, and the social processes by which fashion and taste in cultural production and consumption changed. He was particularly a pioneer in examining the social relations among print and electronic media and educational institutions in reconstituting modern culture (1961). Sociologists have not yet drawn on his works very substantially, though they have been extremely influential in certain neighboring discourses, including not only literary criticism but Marxist studies of culture. Some other sociologists have, however, made significant contributions to the effort to develop a full fledged sociology of literature. Beyond the pioneering contributions of Lucien Goldman and others influenced by Georg Lukács and the Marxist tradition of sociological literary criticism, there have been noteworthy modern works by sociological researchers (e.g., Lowenthal 1961; Wilson 1979). One of the most noteworthy attempts to bridge the gap between sociological attention to conditions of literary (and theatrical) production and hermeneutically serious efforts to retain a focus on literature as meaningful has come in the work of

Wendy Griswold (e.g., 1981, 1986, 1987a, and in the present volume). What Williams, Griswold, and others have tried to do for literature and theater is beginning also to have analogues in the study of other forms of both popular and high culture (perhaps most notably in Becker 1984).

III

Central to the development of a more active sociology of culture has been the shift from treating culture as simply the inheritance of everyone in society, the repository of basically integrating values, toward viewing it as a product of human action. Though the label "production of culture" has been linked in sociology to a more specific, usually non-hermeneutic, line of inquiry into the institutional conditions of cultural production (Hirsch 1972; Peterson 1978, 1979), the shift in orientation is much broader (see Wuthnow's 1987 discussion of an "institutional" approach to cultural analysis). It is closely related to the reemergence of "action" orientations in sociological theory, and especially to the attempts (e.g., in the work of Bourdieu and Giddens) to overcome sharp dualistic divides between action-oriented and structural analyses.

This focus on the means and dynamics of cultural production draws on works from various heritages. Williams stressed it from a Marxist vantage point, shared in some part by Janet Wolff (1981). Howard Becker raised similar issues in his splendid *Art Worlds* (1984), building mainly on rich empirical sources, including participant observation, but also drawing on the symbolic interactionist tradition. Essentially structuralist sociologists have shown the relevance of their work to analyzing the conditions for cultural production. Blau, Blau, and Golden (1986), for example, analyze the location of artists' residences and of artistic production in relation to (a) audience, insofar as the presence of an elite due to unequal wealth and education provides for a group of consumers of high culture, and (b) the fact that some artists require certain sorts of resources for their work, including the presence of other artists, while other forms of art make this less important. In other words, writers and painters can retire to the woods to work if they want to, but not actors and musicians (see also Blau, forthcoming).

In the present volume, the articles by both David Brian and Wendy Griswold focus on analyses of cultural production. Brian's article is noteworthy not only for its empirical treatment of changes in architectural styles, but also for its use of a theoretical framework heavily influenced by Foucault (as well as by Bourdieu and others in the post-structuralist tradition). This enables Brian to critique and expand conventional lines of inquiry into the production of culture in an original way.⁹ Griswold's article is an empirical exemplification of the methodological framework she outlined in a recent article (1987b). Conceptually, it draws on the sociological "production of culture" school, of

which Griswold is an important member. It also breaks interesting new ground in the study of cross-cultural transfers by examining how authors adapt fictional forms from one cultural context for production and consumption in another, and at the same time how those authors thematize relations between their native cultures and colonial or other cosmopolitan cultural domains.

The issue of cultural production is linked closely to the matter of power. Both traditional functionalism and extreme structuralism tend to neglect the active deployment of social power. Following the lead of figures like Gramsci, one of the major concerns of social and political analysts recently has been the way in which cultural patterns may serve to empower or disempower and constrain social actors. Obviously the sometimes heavy hand of the "culture industry" (Hirsch 1972) is a key example.¹⁰ While Hirsch's emphasis is on the specifically commercial, the more general issues go beyond production, narrowly conceived, to include the whole range of social actions which determine access to cultural processes which mediate between artists (the immediate producers of works of art) and publics (the consumers, enjoyers, audience for works of art). These affect what is produced (and how the process of production is experienced) as well as what is seen, heard, and read (see also Williams 1981, ch. 2). Pierre Bourdieu (1984, p. 30) makes a nice point about how museums shift discourse, interpretation, and understanding about art. Not only do museums announce that works are art by hanging them on their walls, but they shift the field of reference. Works of art are to be understood increasingly by reference to other works of art with which they share museum space, rather than by reference to the "real world" they may (or, perhaps increasingly, may not) claim to portray (see also Bourdieu, Darbel and Schnapper 1969). As both Althusser (1971) and Foucault (1977) have stressed, culture is never neutral, but always involves relations of power. There is a politics to culture, even where the culture is manifestly apolitical. It may have major effects on which people known of their society, and what kinds of information and opportunities for action are available to them. Taste cultures are not only markers of social status, for example; they help to reproduce hierarchies by leading some social actors to acquire information and styles useful in political discourse and distancing other actions from the same discourses, leading them to lack confidence in their own judgment, or to lack the informational basis for entrance.

In her paper, Michèle Lamont reviews recent work on this link between power and culture, adding suggestions for the development of a comparative perspective. Where Lamont's focus is on the relations of culture to stratification systems, explicitly political aspects of changing communications patterns are taken up by Michael Schudson. His essay explores historical changes in and contrasting cultural contexts for political communication.

A nonexplicit, but nonetheless powerful, form of political communication is found in many entertainment films. One of the most striking instances of

this is the war movie. In his paper, William Adams analyzes the recent wave of films about the Vietnam war. These are key vehicles for the rewriting of a very conflictual popular history. In Adam's analysis, a pattern of cultural production is seen in terms of its relation to traditional American culture, to similar products in other contexts, to the intentions of creators and likely social-political effects. And his interpretation of the process of internalization (including partial but always limited) domestication of the war is of great topical interest as well.

Communications and media studies are among the most important areas beginning to develop a research tradition on social issues in cultural analysis. Studies of advertising (the most prominent is Schudson 1985) have addressed the flow of information through ads, their reflection of cultural patterns and the nature of advertising as a social institution. Advertising has been seen interestingly as a kind of discourse about relationships between persons and things (Leiss, Kline, and Jhally 1986; Schudson 1985, pp. 135-61; and especially, Csikszentmihaly and Rochberg-Halton 1983, which takes this up well beyond the realm of advertising). A significant part of this investing of goods with meanings is accomplished through advertising, in which certain toothpastes or cars are invested with sexual meanings, other products associated with health or happiness, etc.—a topic addressed by Goffman (1979).¹¹ Of course the particular power of advertising in modern Western societies depends on the development of a "culture of consumption" fueled by capitalist needs to expand consumer markets and motivate economic participation (Fox and Lears 1983).

Less pervasive than advertising, perhaps, but also of striking importance is the production of that distinctly modern cultural form: the news. Schudson has written a leading historical study of the newspaper (1978; see also Smith 1980), and recently co-edited a significant anthology on *Reading the News* (Manoff and Schudson 1986). A variety of other sociologists have contributed significant studies on topics from "what does the press report?" to "how do audiences and readerships make sense of the news?" (notably Gans 1980). Their work often has had less influence in sociology proper, however, than in the emerging field of communications studies.¹² This interdisciplinary field has begun to grow in exciting ways, but so far contemporary American sociology has been more influential in research methods than in theory or substantive analysis. Nonetheless, a variety of researchers in communications are carrying out important sociological studies, even if they come from other disciplinary backgrounds and do not publish in sociology journals. Incorporating such work—for example, on the impact of new communications technologies, or on the treatment of race and gender in the media—into "mainstream" sociology is a key desideratum for the discipline today.

The inherently interdisciplinary nature of most of the best work in communications is thus an important challenge to sociologists' insularity. To

refer back to the indicator of canonical disciplinary wisdom used at the beginning of this essay (the introductory textbook), it is noteworthy that few chapters on culture devote any attention to studies of the media and their transformation. If they treat contemporary empirical studies of culture, mention is likely to be made primarily of the narrower tradition of work on the production of culture—i.e., studies which are clearly “sociological” in their focus on institutional gatekeepers or organizational conditions of production. One can hope, perhaps, that this will change as sociologists like Schudson and James Beniger (1986) carry out important work on communications. So far, however, their work has attracted greater attention among faculties of communications departments than among sociologists. And sociologists need also be willing to recognize as genuine sociology the work of scholars in communications departments and other interdisciplinary settings—e.g., that of Joshua Meyrowitz (1985), Brian Winston (1987), Neil Postman (1985) or for that matter, Raymond Williams.

IV

The general issue of how sociologists relate to other disciplines and to interdisciplinary discourses is of crucial importance for the future of the sociology of culture. It is perhaps no accident that today's foremost sociologist of culture, Pierre Bourdieu, both moved to sociology from anthropology (after initial training in philosophy) and works in Paris, one of the world's most vital settings for interdisciplinary discourses. For the rest of us, it is important to consider how a developing sociology of culture will relate to contemporary cultural anthropology, folklore, and linguistics; to the discourse loosely labeled “postmodernism” or “poststructuralism,” and partly through it to contemporary work on literature and the arts; to the various Marxist approaches to culture, from E.P. Thompson's historical analyses to Habermas's theory of communicative action and the public sphere; to debates on culture and ethical discourse in philosophy and jurisprudence; and, perhaps most importantly, to feminism.

Feminist scholarship has raised a wide range of cultural issues, some of them strikingly absent from previous sociological work, others recasting ideas already in use. Notions of production and reproduction, of public and private, of the importance of silences as well as speech, and, perhaps most basically, of the significance of difference, have all received important attention (see Benhabib and Cornell 1987, for a recent and important anthology). For some sociologists, including some significant feminist researchers, this has meant little alteration in basic approach. These researchers have simply focused more attention on gender as a variable—e.g., in studies of stratification or the labor force—without using a more culturally oriented approach to examine gender

as a conceptual category. Others, however, have argued that taking gender seriously calls for a more fundamental reevaluation of approach (e.g., Harding 1986; Keller 1987). For a number of feminist sociologists—and for others influenced by their work—this appreciation of the centrality of gender to much that was previously considered gender-neutral has prompted renewed attention to basic questions about culture.

Here too, of course, there are important links between culture and power. Paul Lichterman's essay on "Making a Politics of Masculinity" takes these up in one of the most interesting analyses yet done of male responses to—in this case adoption of—feminism. His study of a group of men dedicated to overcoming sexual violence is of significance for the social movements literature partly because it goes beyond analysis of mobilization as such, or its conditions, to examine the role of culturally informed self-understandings and their transformation in a movement context. John Shelton Reed's article on male gender roles in Victorian Anglo-Catholicism also links a movement analysis to a cultural one, and reveals a perhaps surprising complementarity to Lichterman's. Reed shows that the charges of effeminacy leveled against Anglo-Catholic men, especially clergy, were not simply groundless accusations, but responses to the movement's implicit protest against reigning ideals of masculinity, particularly its equation with rigid self-restraint and "muscularity." In Anglo-Catholic ritualism, young men found both a mode of protest and a community in which putatively "womanish" tastes and values were at home. Reed succeeds in shedding new light on what might have been thought one of the few exhausted issues in the social analysis of culture: Victorian sexual mores.

James Peacock's essay on Calvinism is similar to Reed's not only in its focus on a religious group, but in its ability to bring new insight based on empirical research into a well-known topic. In this case, the topic is provided by one of the most widely read books in the social analysis of culture: Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Using fieldwork in a severely Calvinist sect as his basis, Peacock explores the question of how one is to reconcile the quintessentially Durkheimian understanding of religion as fundamentally social with the doctrinal and cultural claim that it is precisely a transcendence of the social. The issue is partly methodological: how can one take both Durkheim and the doctrinal statements and beliefs of informants seriously at the same time. In fact, Peacock shows, this is a problem also for the Calvinists he studied: they attempt to build religious community with a theology which denies significance to any such worldly form.

V

This raises basic questions not only about Calvinism, but about the relationship between functional and/or structural approaches to analysis and the

knowledge—either tacit or self-aware—of human agents. Giddens (1985) and other social theorists have inveighed against sociologists' tendency to neglect the hermeneutic challenge posed by the fact that the people we study are self-aware actors engaged in the process of creating the social life we tend to reify as structure. Sociologists of culture are generally less likely than many others to neglect the knowledgeability of actors, but it is important that studies proceed with a full awareness of the limits of purely discursive knowledge (knowing *that*) and the importance of practical knowledge (knowing *how*). This is a point which Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1980) has emphasized as importantly as anyone. Practical knowledge is understood in ways hard to separate from action; it may be impossible for most people to separate from simply doing the act. Thus, most of us are perfectly competent English speakers; we know how to speak English. But could we enunciate all the rules in English, let alone explain just exactly what shapes our tongues must curl into to make different sounds? Remarkably large proportions of sociological data nonetheless are used in ways which presume that actors' discursive accounts of what they do reveal the whole of their knowledge. Approaches which might rectify this—participant observation and related field research techniques, for example—are disappointingly compartmentalized within sociology. And qualitative sociologists have not yet gone as far as anthropologists in recognizing the need to situate the fieldworker and the practical activity of fieldwork in the research analysis and report.¹³ This concern for the practical status of claims to knowledge is central to the work of Bourdieu and to the partially cognate work of Michel Foucault. A first point, of course, is the implicit claim to power which is present in every claim to knowledge or truth. But there is also a more historically specific point to be made about the central role which claims to scientific and other sorts of truthful knowledge play in modern Western societies. We are in many ways distinctively focused on the opposition between knowledge and "mere belief." Some ways of approaching this issue, however, court a dangerous relativism in an unwillingness to suggest any grounds other than power for adjudicating truth claims (or practical arguments).¹⁴

A closely related question is the status of apparently irrational beliefs. If we do not recognize absurd or false beliefs as "true" knowledge, we need to make some sort of distinction among beliefs. Following Daniel Sperber (1985), we can distinguish three sorts of belief: (1) factual beliefs, (2) representational beliefs, or (3) symbolic comments with hidden meanings. Factual beliefs appear to believers as "just plain knowledge." In other words, within a particular cultural context, believing in them requires no special explanation. Some of these factual beliefs are "propositional," meaning that they have to do with empirical propositions about the world. Some propositions are fairly readily checkable, others are not. Even which ones are checkable varies from culture to culture (or historical period to historical period). For example, from my point of view, thinking that the world is flat is not knowledge, but a false belief.

If it is widely shared in your culture, it does not indicate any irrationality on your part to share it, as you are only sharing in your culture's representation of the world. This is especially so since your culture may lack (like the West before Columbus) the capacity to check this belief very readily. The less readily a belief can be checked on, the less propositional it becomes, though people generally state such beliefs in propositional form.¹⁵ You may hold your conviction about the flatness of the world very strongly, and it may count as knowledge in your culture. I would nonetheless be entitled to regard it as false knowledge insofar as you meant it to be an empirical description of the world. My entitlement stems from the combination of the propositional nature of the belief and my claim to adequate capacity for checking its accuracy.

While all knowledge is at one level a matter of mental representations, and based on culture, the second set of beliefs are more specifically representational. These are beliefs which do not have to do with "obvious knowledge" that everyone in a culture would take for granted, but rather ones which people will describe as "convictions," "persuasions," "faiths," or "beliefs." What these terms indicate is that holders of these beliefs recognize (at least at some level, perhaps unconsciously) that they are neither universally shared nor clearly demonstrable to people who do not already share closely related common beliefs. Many religious beliefs are of this sort. They may be strongly and sincerely held, but they differ from what we (especially in a scientific culture) consider knowledge or facts.

The third sort of belief is the kind that often seemed most irrational to anthropologists working in other cultures, beliefs which seemed absurd or false by any standard. One approach to such beliefs is to show them to be symbolic or metaphorical comments. A famous example is the statement of the Bororo of Central Brazil "we are red macaws (birds)." This was long taken to be a sign of the irrationality of these "primitive" people (a reliance on symbolic rather than propositional thought). Later, the American anthropologist Christopher Corcker reinvestigated the matter, and found the statement to be a sophisticated, ironic metaphor: (1) only men say "we are red macaws," (2) red macaws are owned as pets by Bororo women, (3) men are dependent on women in important ways (especially in Bororo society because descent and inheritance is reckoned through the female line, and newlywed couples live with the wife's family), and (4) both men and macaws are thought to reach beyond the women's sphere through their contacts with spirits. Crocker sums up: "In metaphorically identifying themselves with red macaws, then, the Bororo . . . seek . . . to express the irony of their masculine condition" (1972, p. 192). In other words, on this interpretation, the Bororo mean their statement in a nonliteral way; they express a kind of belief by means of metaphor, which must be understood through a process of unraveling the meanings of symbols in light of social relationships. This understanding is essentially rationalist; it works by discovering a hidden metaphorical meaning. An alternative approach is to argue that such apparently

false statements are meant literally, not merely as metaphor, in an existentially lived reality more radically different from our own.¹⁶

As this short example suggests, there is a great deal of complexity and subtlety in modern anthropological and philosophical thought on culture which American sociologists are only just beginning to take up. This line of discussion, however, is of central importance for studies of culture which are either explicitly or implicitly comparative.¹⁷ The meaning of symbols—as arguably of all language—is not exhausted by propositional reference to the external world, but is constituted also by “relations to other symbols in a symbolic system. Thus, for example, the color term ‘blue’ derives its meaning not just from pointing to physical objects which are blue, but from its relationship to other color terms like green or turquoise which define its boundaries” (Sahlins 1985, p. 150). A proposition pulled from its cultural context cannot necessarily be given precisely the same meaning in another language or culture. If the matter were left there, the problem of translatability and culture self-referentiality would present insurmountable problems for cultural analysis. Fortunately, however, meaning is not only the product of reference to an object world and to other symbols in a more or less statically conceived, structural sense of language, but is also actively created by perceivers and interpreters (a point made in a slightly different context by Griswold 1987a, p. 1079). This makes possible a process of communication and learning through which interlocutors can arrive at shared understandings, though these may not be identical with the understandings with which either began the discourse (Taylor 1985). Such a discourse is central to ethnographic fieldwork (nearly all of which can be considered cross-cultural in some degree), though it is not well recognized by the many authors who write as though they were omniscient narrators and fail to make clear that the “facts” they report are largely the products of a communicative construction of meaning.

Something of this is highlighted in the present volume by Bachnik’s article on *omote* and *ura*—paired terms which index the self-society relationship in Japanese culture. Bachnik takes up the hard question of how—if at all—one is to use such terms to explain Japanese social life when they are, in fact, at least partially performative creatures of highly situated action which do not refer to any purely general content but rather must be understood within the context of their use. In this sense, *omote* and *ura* convey meaning pragmatically rather than, or as well as, semantically. Pragmatic meaning relies particularly on what C.S. Peirce called indexicality, the pointing relation which is crucial to the establishment of concrete reference in a context of spatiotemporal continuity. For Bachnik, this understanding of pragmatic meaning is inhibited by pervasive biases in favor of referentiality which are characteristics of Western culture. Failure to address pragmatic meaning, however, can severely vitiate the value of comparative research. And for Bachnik, this is true not only of research into language, but into social life itself.

Sociolinguistics is a potentially important but underdeveloped branch of comparative social research, especially in sociology. Language use serves to identify groups both by internal process of recognition amongst members and by external stereotyping (Gumperz 1982). Linguistic codes may shape different class potential for abstract understanding (Bernstein 1975; Dittmar 1976). Patterns of speech and other linguistic usages serve as social markers of the kind of situation people are in. For example, speech patterns may vary with age, gender, or class of interlocutors (see discussion in Scherer and Giles 1979). Bilingual speakers, or speakers of "pidgin" or "creole" mixtures of different languages, may shift linguistic codes in order to include or exclude others in their discourse.

But the significance of modern linguistics for comparative sociology does not stop with these sorts of external relations between language and social practices. It is crucial to address the role of language in the production of meaning. In particular, it is important to look at the pragmatics of language, at its active, situated instantiation (and sometimes modification) in use, not to see it as a static repository of meanings or structural relations (Levinson 1983; Silverstein 1976, 1979). Such pragmatic features of language include variations on the ways languages lead speakers to report the speech of others, to make reference to themselves, and in general to engage in the sorts of activities which define social identities. These microsocial features of language are not without macrosocial significance. There are thus features of English (linked to what Silverstein [1979] has called the Western linguistic ideology which favors attention to referential over pragmatic meaning) which make it particularly easy for English speakers to ascribe the capacity for action to a collectivity of persons understood as being a singular unity: thus we may refer to a corporation quite readily as a person. We say, for example, "Exxon tries to make oil prices rise," as though Exxon was clearly a singular subject capable of will and action.¹⁸ This linguistic practice encourages us English speakers (like speakers of most other modern Western languages) to see corporations as "real" in the same sense as human beings, rather than as patterns or products of human activity. Language, thus, may exert a fundamental shaping influence on the rest of culture. This was the point of the famous Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which need not be taken as implying so extreme a linguistic determinism as to be clearly false (e.g., in the common example of saying that because Hopi language lacks tenses, Hopi must lack a sense of time; see Lucy 1987).¹⁹

Important as language is, it is not somehow prior to social action and determinant of it. Language is part of social action, shaped in and by social relations, as well as shaping of them.²⁰ But if language is not prior to social action, neither is it anterior and simply available for manipulation. Language is not external to social action; it *is* social action. Much the same could be said of other aspects of culture, which suggests a drawback to the conceptualization recently proposed by Swidler (1986). Swidler sensibly argues

against seeing culture as simply a repository of values which shape action, but substitutes “an image of culture as a ‘tool-kit’ of symbols, stories, rituals and world-views, which people may use in varying configurations to solve different kinds of problems” (1986, p. 273). In her attempt to analyze “culture’s casual effects,” she makes culture into a set of objects seized upon by people engaged in strategies of action, but does not address the implication of culture in the very construction of persons as actors (individually, as she seems to assume, or, perhaps better, intersubjectively), or of action itself. Though Swidler’s aim is a theory of “culture in action,” she makes of culture simply a category of objects and perpetuates an unhelpful dualism. To then allow that strategies of action are also culturally constituted does not avoid the problem. There is a basic difference between introducing a cybernetic feedback loop connecting culture and action, and seeing culture *as* action.

VI

Conceptualizing the role of action—particularly in relation to structure—is a critical issue for cultural analysis, enough so to merit an excursus on recent arguments from two leading sociological students of culture: Robert Wuthnow and William Sewell, Jr.

In the most important recent general work on cultural analysis by an American sociologist, Wuthnow at once expresses adherence to an understanding of culture as a product of human action and argues that cultural analysis must move beyond “subjectivism.” This subjectivism, he suggests, was characteristic of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim alike. It involved a focus on the subjective beliefs or outlooks of individuals, and derived from the Cartesian split between subject and object.²¹ For the founding classical tradition of sociology, Wuthnow suggests that this led to a “radical sociology of knowledge” approach in which culture was explained as merely the reflection in individual subjects of the material reality of “objective” social structure. This approach was superseded by “neo-classical” writers such as Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, Clifford Geertz and Robert Bellah. They differed from Marx, Weber, and Durkheim primarily in taking culture more seriously for its own sake—e.g., as a source of the basic meaningfulness of life—rather than immediately reducing it to a reflection of social structure. They emphasized also a more holistic view of how the various parts of meaning systems fit together.²² Wuthnow’s third wave comes with the writings of Mary Douglas, Michel Foucault, and Jürgen Habermas, whom he rather surprisingly groups together under the label “post-structuralists.” This structuralism which makes the prefix possible involved for Wuthnow essentially an expansion of the “neo-classical” argument that the internal relations of cultural “materials” were important.²³

Wuthnow himself is mainly concerned to build on this eclectic post-structural foundation, though incorporating influences from the other approaches. The virtues of the post-structuralists are that they no longer focus on the problem of meaning, which is hard to pin down in systematic empirical inquiry, and accordingly that they do not see culture as a matter of individual subjective orientations. In other words, it is only by going beyond subjectivity and meaning that Wuthnow believes the study of culture can become truly sociological and empirical.²⁴ We must study discourse about meanings, for example, not meanings as such.

At one level, this is fair enough, and a wise caution to those who forget that a survey response is a form of discourse not a direct revelation of inner meaning. It is unfortunate, however, that (despite his inclusion of Habermas among his post-structuralist models) Wuthnow does not try to develop any theoretical notion of intersubjectivity (cf. Dallmayr 1981). Much of Habermas's effort has been aimed at developing an understanding of social action which is not based on a "philosophy of consciousness" which exhibits, among other bad features, the subject-object dualism Wuthnow also opposes (Habermas 1987). But Habermas does not conceive of this as eliminating subjectivity, only a false, individualistic conceptualization of subjectivity.²⁵ In short, Wuthnow moves much too radically to an assertion of the primacy of structure, and despite his intention to keep action in the picture loses sight of it. Just as Swidler's approach to culture tends worrisomely towards an instrumentalism despite her best intentions, so Wuthnow's tends towards an actorless, anonymous account of cultural systems which has a surprising amount in common with old-fashioned functionalism as well as new-fangled post-structuralism.

With some notable similarities to Wuthnow, Sewell (1985) has recently mounted a polemic against Theda Skocpol's (1979) dismissal of ideology as an important autonomous causal factor in social revolutions.²⁶ Skocpol ruled out the autonomous power of ideology on the basis of a rather simplistic test; she showed that "any line of reasoning that treats revolutionary ideologies as blueprints for revolutionary outcomes cannot sustain scrutiny" (1979, p. 170). In other words, the outcome of the French Revolution, for example, cannot be understood as the product of ideology of any particular group of revolutionary participants or leaders—Jacobins, Girondins, sans-culottes, etc. On this basis, she concludes that the cognitive content of ideology has no predictive power as an independent variable in explaining revolutions. Her error, Sewell suggests, lies in assuming that the only way ideology could be important is through the predictive power of the ideology of some particular group or set of actors. Ideology need not be identified with any actors in particular, Sewell suggests. He claims authority from Althusser, Foucault, Geertz, and (Raymond) Williams for an alternative view of ideology as the anonymous and impersonal operation of ideological state apparatuses,

epistememes, cultural systems, or structures of feeling. This view of ideology is structural, he suggests, just as are the forces of class, state, and international relations which form the basis of Skocpol's analysis. Skocpol, therefore, dealt with only a "naive voluntarist conception of ideology" (Sewell 1985, p. 61). Sewell agrees that this can be dismissed, but argues that in the more structuralist sense, ideology must be understood as constitutive of the social order.

Sewell goes on to try to demonstrate the importance of ideology through a summary account of the French Revolution of 1789. I cannot take the space to reproduce his empirical sketch here. It turns on an understanding of ideology as the overall structure of discursive and cognitive arrangements affecting action. For example, he suggests that the Estates General, having not been called since 1614, had a solely ideological existence in 1788; the necessity of reviving it, which provided much of the occasion for the Revolution, was an ideological necessity. Sewell places considerable emphasis on the night of August 4th, in which he sees the National Assembly first forced to destroy seigneurial privileges by the pressure of peasant class struggle, and then, "moved forward by an overwhelming urge for ideological consistency" to destroy the entire existing system of privilege (1985, p. 69). Where Skocpol sees the night of August 4th as simply an outcome of the peasant revolt, Sewell insists that "it was a crucial turning point in two quite distinct revolutionary processes: a class process of peasant revolt and an ideological process of conceptual transformation" (1985, p. 70). August 4th brought closure to the peasants' class struggle by assenting to the destruction of the seigneurial system. And it brought an end to the ideological dynamic of tension between Enlightenment and corporate monarchical principles. But it *began* another ideological dynamic: the elaboration of Enlightenment metaphysical principles into a new revolutionary social and political structure. The ideological consequences of the Revolution include, Sewell suggests, the modern notion of nationalism and the very idea of revolution itself as the overthrow of one government by the people and its replacement by another government. Indeed, Sewell would go even further than this and argue that the definition of "social revolution" include the ideological presence of a totalitarian ambition to restructure all of social life, from top to bottom and across the board.

In reply, Skocpol (1985) accepts Sewell's criticism of her earlier treatment of ideology, but challenges his argument that the concept of ideology should be used in an entirely impersonal, anonymous, and structuralist sense. Ironically, given the reputation as an extreme proponent of structural analysis and the frequent criticism of her neglect of both culture and intentional action, Skocpol argues for these notions against Sewell's ideological structuralism. The central difficulty with Sewell's argument, Skocpol contends, is his failure to distinguish between a notion of culture which is "transpersonal" and anonymous, and ideology and cultural idioms as these are brought into use by specific actors in revolutionary transformations. Skocpol suggests that the

“structuralism” of *States and Social Revolution* has often been misunderstood. She did not mean “to read intentional group action out of revolutions, only to situate it theoretically for the explanatory purposes at hand” (1985, p. 87). It is in this sense that she maintained the notion that ideology (understood as the orientation and intentions of any particular group) cannot predict the outcomes of revolutionary struggles. The struggles are real, and are active creations of people acting with ideologies, but their outcomes are predicted largely by the “structural” factors of class power, state formation and, international relations. In her reply to Sewell (as in a recent article on the Iranian revolution), Skocpol (1982) acknowledges that she might profitably have paid more attention to the ideological struggles of the revolutions she examined. But she is at pains to distinguish her understanding of ideological struggles—clashes between groups of people putting forward different political programs or ways of understanding current situations—from Sewell’s understanding of ideology as more or less synonymous with “cultural systems” in general.

Skocpol identifies Sewell’s argument essentially with cultural anthropology, and particularly with Geertz, who indeed has been a major influence on Sewell. But as we have seen, Sewell’s arguments are part of a broader current of thought including also Foucault and Althusser among others. It is an indication of how little this line of thought has entered into mainstream American sociological discourse that Skocpol fails to notice it as the background to Sewell’s approach to ideology. Recognizing it, however, gives greater significance to the dispute between Skocpol and Sewell, for it points up that among the issues at stake is the status of action in sociocultural theory and analysis. Taken to an extreme (which Sewell does not do) the “decentered” analyses of the structuralists and poststructuralists remove so completely the active role of agents that they eliminate the possibility of most sorts of normative critique, and most understandings of how history might have been otherwise [this issue is widely debated with regard to Foucault and poststructuralist thought; the critiques are generally consonant with Thompson’s (1978) attack on Althusserian structuralism]. Thus, Skocpol points out that in her understanding structures are certainly not actors; Sewell implicitly adopts an approach in which cultural structures are the independent source of their own transformation, a sort of unfolding. Ideology thus acts through agents rather than being made and put forward by actors. This account doubtless makes Sewell uncomfortable, for although his primary thrust in the article under examination is structuralist/poststructuralist, he does distance himself from the more complex opposition to voluntarism espoused by others swimming in that stream. He writes, for example, that “ideological utterances, like all other forms of social action, require the exercise of human will. To say that an ideology “is structured” or “is a structure” is not to say that it is inaccessible to human violation, but that ideological action is shaped by preexisting ideological (and other) realities”

(1985, p. 60). Here Sewell associates himself with Giddens' notion of the "dual" character of all social structures—at once constraining and enabling. Nonetheless, Sewell goes out of his way to stress the anonymous character of ideologies and processes of historical change; major historical processes are at the extreme of "unintended consequences of purposive social action" (in Merton's phrase); the number of actors is so large as to make the contributions of particular individuals or groups more or less negligible (see also Sewell 1986). According to Sewell, "ideology must . . . be understood as constitutive of social order" (1985; p. 61). In other words, Sewell does not say that ideology (or culture) is partially constitutive of actors whose actions make or change social arrangements (which may be more or less orderly). In short, in his critique of Skocpol, Sewell comes very near to making ideology (or culture) the kind of holistic category which bypasses the role of human actors (individual or collective) in making history. That this is presumably not Sewell's intention does not make it any less the result of his analytic categories (this is perhaps an instance of the unintended consequences of ideology).

Against this, Skocpol argues that one should adopt a narrower definition of ideology as "idea systems deployed as self-conscious political arguments by identifiable political actors" (1985, p. 91). And, she suggests, we should add a third analytic concept, "cultural idioms" which "have a longer-term, more anonymous, and less partisan existence than ideologies" (*ibid.*). Actors use cultural idioms in constructing ideologies. On this basis, Skocpol hopes to be able to attend to the interplay of intentional and nonintentional aspects of ideas in the course of revolutions. Neither ideology nor cultural idioms, in her usage, constitute the sort of holistic, integrated system which Sewell's usage seems (at least at points) to suggest. Thus, for example, she sees no basis for attributing "nationalism" to "some Enlightenment-inspired cultural code" but instead points out how deliberately Napoleon and associated actors amalgamated "nationalism with contradictory strands of revolutionary political symbolism in order to stabilize a bureaucratic-authoritarian state without the aid of an hegemonic political party" (1985, p. 93). Analysis of the role of ideology and cultural idioms "requires that we examine very concretely the consciousness and talk of particularly situated acting groups, and that we take seriously the essentially political tasks they were trying to accomplish during the Revolution (1985, p. 94; an important recent discussion of such revolutionary discourse is Hunt 1984). Skocpol's reading of the political purposes is still very state-centered, which leads her to underestimate the force of Sewell's point about the very large amount of revolutionary effort which went into tasks such as reforming measurement and categorization of time and space. Nonetheless, she raises a crucial analytic issue. The approach Sewell advocates is useful for drawing attention to the non-neutral ways in which broad cultural patterns shape discourse and action. But by emphasizing the internal systematicity of such cultural patterns—ideologies, in his term—

over the role of human action, he at least implicitly downplays the creative and contestative significance of action itself. In this way, his analysis comes to look more like the structuralist anthropological history practiced by Sahlins (1985) than like the dual approach to the interplay of structure and action advocated by Giddens (1985) or the attempt to overcome this dichotomy put forward by Bourdieu (1977, 1980).

VII

Two papers in the present volume take up different aspects of the relation of culture (and ideology) to action. Gary Fine's paper is largely an attempt to establish that tradition is a continuous process, not what Bagehot called "the hard cake of culture," and to show the potential fruitfulness of bringing together approaches from folklore and symbolic interactionism. Although he focuses on groups rather than individuals, Fine's paper is similar to Swidler's in seeing tradition as a rhetorical strategy. This opens up a variety of interesting questions about how traditions are manipulated, and how they exert a shaping influence on political disclosure.²⁷ Near the end of her (interesting, if problematic) essay, Swidler also asked a related question which goes beyond this: how do ideologies, constructed with greater or lesser self-awareness by social actors, become tradition or common sense? In his paper, Parmentier tackles this question head on, asking how cultural conventions can come to seem "natural." His approach shares much with Swidler's, but is shaped also by a fundamental commitment to taking seriously the pragmatic dimension to culture. And this commitment fosters a reflexivity in which Parmentier notes that the process of naturalization takes place in social theory as well as social reality. "Positivist" (it might be better to say "empiricist") modes of discourse treat cultural conventions, the products of human action, as natural and necessary. It is thus not the case (as Parmentier shows with wide-ranging examples) that social conventions always appear arbitrary to analysts, but natural to actors. Analysts' claim to find an inherent universal logic (be it utilitarian rationalism or biological adaptation) deny the element of arbitrariness which allows cultural forms to be seen as truly the products of human action. At the same time, naturalization is not the only way cultural conventions come to be taken as given by ordinary people; they can be made binding with no extra-cultural reference, Parmentier suggests, for example by what he calls poeticization.

The critique of positivism which Parmentier suggests is taken in different directions by the two last papers in the volume. The first is by another anthropologist, Terence Evens, who challenges the empiricist dictum that in studying another society or culture we can avoid being misled if we focus not on what our subjects say but on what they do. The catch, of course, is that

there is no unbiased observation, no empirical fact untainted by prior categorization. Evens does not stop with this point, however, but goes on to use Evans-Pritchard's famous studies of the Nuer of East Africa as the ethnographic basis for an analysis of how we can get beyond the opposition of "actual practice" and "cultural norms." His argument is phenomenological and turns on the attempt to establish what sort of ontological basis is needed to make sense of both Nuer statements and Nuer practices (rather than to use one to discredit the other as "mere error," "primitive irrationality," or "folk model"). The empirical case will be relatively foreign to sociologists, though it is one of the most central to anthropologists: the contrast between the Nuer claim that lineages are based on agnation and the apparently low proportion of agnates in observed lineages.²⁸ The conceptual dilemma should be all too familiar.

Lastly, Eugene Rochberg-Halton's essay on the life concept in social theory takes us back to Charles Sanders Peirce and pragmatism, though in a somewhat different way from Bachnik and Parmentier (the latter's perspective being shaped by Peirce, though he is not cited directly in this article). Here the empirical cultural case is that of social theory itself. The questions are why did the late nineteenth and early-twentieth century European (especially German) context give rise to a widespread reliance on some version of a life concept, how and why did partially contemporaneous and otherwise similar American thought differ on this point, and why did the life concept fall from favor? (Its Nazification of course figures prominently in the answer to the last question.) Beyond the comparative analysis, as one might suspect, Rochberg-Halton has a theoretical interest in the life concept. Like Bachnik, Evens, and others represented in the present volume (and like Giddens, Bourdieu, and other social theorists giving a new prominence to cultural analysis today), he is concerned to overcome certain endemic dualisms which have long plagued Western thought. But rather than a synthesis of internal/ideal vs. external/material, he calls for a basic rethinking of the relationship between culture and life.

VIII

Obviously, neither this introduction nor this volume even touches on the whole range of contemporary cultural studies. Such central topics as the relationship of traditional culture to nationalism, the role of culture in class struggle, or the implications of new understandings of culture for studies of socialization do not receive the attention they deserve. Yet this is inevitable, for the range of topics to be addressed in the social study of culture is much too large to be contained within a single book, even if that book were only a list.

The diversity and range suggests, among other things, the error of seeing cultural studies as simply a topical subfield within sociology. To be sure, not

every sociologist will focus his or her attention on cultural analysis. But cultural issues impinge on every object of sociological study. It is of vital importance to the discipline that attention to culture be fully integrated into the whole range of substantive research, not compartmentalized. Leading theorists have already begun to introduce a cultural dimension into their theories. This does not, for the most part, appear as it did in some earlier theories as an imperialist claim that culture is somehow the explanation of nearly everything social. Rather, it appears as a recognition of the cultural movement in all social analysis, the interpretative moment in all social research, and the active, knowledgeable social agency involved in all human life.

Culture, then, is neither merely a special class of objects for social study, nor in itself a sufficient conceptual arena for social analysis. It is an essential part of all social life and therefore of all social research and analysis. In the rest of this volume, authors explore cultural issues from a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches. They take up a wide range of topics, some of which might be easily categorized into the domain sociology textbooks designate for cultural studies, others of which might not. Some are done by sociologists, others by anthropologists (and one by a political scientist). This is significant partly because in this area of research the notion of a defensible intellectual division of labor between anthropology and sociology must seem ludicrous; clearly the two disciplines are joined in a common analytic venture. The excitement of interdisciplinary collaboration and learning is but one of the many factors nourishing the flourishing revival and reformulation of cultural studies today.

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NOTES

1. Perhaps one can hope that this will change as Robert Wuthnow's (1987) work showing the linkages between sociology of religion and cultural analysis more generally becomes better known. On the other hand the distinguished works of his teacher Robert Bellah have not yet had that effect.

2. Perhaps one should not blame the authors alone. Aiming for the mass market, publishers have created and the profession has accepted a lowest common denominator approach to introductory texts. This enforces a high degree of similarity and conventionality in offerings. Though all successful books are revised frequently to support the claim that they are up to date, publishers are highly resistant to major changes (and it has to be said that the sociologists publishers hire as reviewers tend to be extremely conservative in their definition of appropriate contents). A publisher's staffer often checks other texts to ensure that precisely the same topics are covered.

For example, in my own text, the publisher required that the culture chapter include a discussion of sociobiology—despite my insistence that this had little to do with contemporary sociology of culture. The grounds were that most of the other texts have something on sociobiology in the culture chapter. And, to be sure, at least one reviewer pointed out the absence of such a feature in my draft. At the same time, the publisher ruled out substantial expansion and updating of the section on language, minimized the treatment of new theoretical, anthropological and comparative historical work on culture and asked that I be sure that Margaret Mead and her recent critics stayed in.

3. Oddly, Wuthnow (1987) also neglects entirely these two leaders in the sociology of culture, whose work would have been very germane to his own attempt to develop an interpretive sociology of culture which looks beyond the subjective orientations of individuals.

4. And under Parsons' leadership, the Harvard Social Relations Department was oriented to producing students who could engage in what I am told (by Robert Wilson) Charles Dollard once described as the best kind of interdisciplinary collaboration—that which occurs when you have two disciplines inside one skull.

5. It is in this connection, even more than in regard to religion, that sociologists in the American mainstream have tended to assume a radically subjectivistic stance towards culture, even when that subjectivism disqualified culture as a focus of their attention (cf. Wuthnow, 1987).

6. Though it seems not to trouble most adherents, something of the same problem seems to beset much of the postmodernist and/or deconstructionist literature.

7. A good deal of what attitude surveys attempt to describe and measure must be considered *xculture*. See Wuthnow (1987, ch. 1) for a discussion of the affinity of this methodology with a subjectivist, individualist understanding of culture which he finds in the classical tradition of sociology (though perhaps he should see this as more an aspect that the whole of the work of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim).

8. DiMaggio (1987) has analyzed the ways in which various features of social structure shape the development of artistic classification schemes, including that between popular and elite culture, as well as others such as classification into genres.

9. Brain's article is also one of a surprisingly small number of empirical sociological uses of Foucault's extremely influential, discourse-creating corpus of work.

10. The partial continuity of this less critical line of sociological analysis with that of Horkheimer and Adorno (1972), Benjamin (1934) and Marcuse (1964) is worth remembering.

11. Goffman might be considered one of the pioneers of cultural sociology, though his work is more often categorized in the symbolic interactionist tradition or even as social psychology (see Collins 1985, on the often neglected Durkheimian foundations for Goffman's work and on its distance from most symbolic interactionism).

12. Communications studies is still very much a field in the making, despite a high level of activity in the last decade. Academic institutionalization involves weaving together work done in traditional journalism schools, mass communications programs, schools and departments of rhetoric and speech, and of radio, television, and motion picture production, by critics and to some extent producers from literature and drama, social scientists, and linguistics. Tensions are strong between applied and more academic approaches, between a major thrust to appropriate respectable social science methodology (resulting in a great many minimally analytic, empiricist publications) and a search for theory, between scholars focusing on program content, on media, on basic psychosocial and linguistic processes of communication, and on social or political implications.

13. This recognition is apparent in Jane Bachnik's contribution to this volume, though it is thematized much more in her forthcoming book. This concern is linked to the notion of anthropology as cultural critique; see the arguments for the centrality of ethnography in Marcus and Fischer (1986), and Clifford and Marcus (1986).

14. Foucault certainly looked into this chasm, but I am not sure he fell. The same cannot so clearly be said for many deconstructionists and some other "post-modernist" thinkers—

including, for example, J.F. Lyotard (1984), to the extent that he can be pinned down on the matter. See also Peter Dews' (1988) outstanding discussion of post-structuralist theory.

15. Sperber calls these "semi-propositional" beliefs; we have lots of beliefs about things we cannot directly check on, like life after death, or the truthfulness of TV advertisements and scientific reports. See also the essays in Hollis and Lukes (1982) including an overlapping one of Sperber's. This topic has a venerable history in anthropology, but was given a new philosophical twist by Winch's (1958) use of Wittgenstein and by Quine (1960).

16. See Evens (1983) discussion of similar sayings (e.g., "twins are birds") among the Nuer for an example of this phenomenological approach.

17. In a sense all studies of cultures other than that of the researcher's own community are comparative because relating observations on meanings from one cultural context to interpreters in another is basic to their work.

18. A Briton, in fact, would be more likely than an American to index the collective character of a corporation by treating a corporate name as plural, as in "Unilever *have* raised their dividend."

19. Similarly, literacy affects both people's language use and their social relations (Ong 1982; Goody 1979). Among the most important effects are the development of a new kind of sense of history. Rather than depending on oral retelling of narratives (Vansina 1985), people can refer back to specific documents. Their historical understanding is likely to become more linear, deeper in chronology, less immediately a reflection of current social arrangements.

20. See Bourdieu (1982) for a social theorist's attempt to look at language this way, and Silverstein (1976, 1979) for a linguist's attempt to open up the social dimension in the study of language.

21. This is a strained and partial reading of "the classics." In the case of Marx, for example, it involves reference only to his early writings on alienation and a spurious psychologistic reading of these. How can one square a statement such as "the problem of meaning in the classical tradition focuses squarely on the individual" (which Wuthnow thinks "may seem trivially obvious") with Marx's declaration that class consciousness "is not a matter of what this or that proletarian may think but of what the class as a whole is and must do?" There are senses in which Marx can be said to be unfortunately individualistic, but not at this level. With regard to both Weber and especially Marx, Wuthnow vacillates between recognizing that their descriptions of a subject-object split (alienation and the iron cage of rationalism) are historically specific conceptualizations and claiming that they are transhistorical ideas about "all of reality" (1987, pp. 23-27). Marx at least did not so much base his writings on a universal Cartesian dualism as purport to account for such a split in terms of a Hegelian theory of history (in his early writings) and an original argument on the categorial nature of capitalism (in his mature writings).

22. Wuthnow's primary examples come from the sociology of religion, and this whole analysis makes more sense for that specialty than for cultural analysis in general. For example, one might note that with regard to culture generally, the "neo-classical" writers fairly directly continued other traditions in cultural anthropology and phenomenology which go back as far as the founding classics of sociology.

23. Thus Lévi-Strauss appears as the crucial antecedent of Mary Douglas; Evans-Pritchard and the rest of structural-functional social anthropology do not figure in the story. Foucault seems also to derive from Lévi-Strauss (and Barthes); Althusser and Bachelard are not mentioned. Habermas's indebtedness to structuralism is seen as coming from "structural linguists like Chomsky and Searle" (the latter of whom would surely feel rather uncomfortable to read this description of his work).

24. It is not clear what it means to move beyond the problem of meaning and yet retain an interpretative approach, unless the latter means only a recognition that no single research effort can claim a final or total truth. Investigation of the general meaningfulness of culture is not an adequate substitute for a direct approach to meaning. See Wolff's (1983) related argument that the sociology of art cannot altogether do away with aesthetics.

25. Though richer arguments on this are to be found in the work of Bourdieu (1977), Taylor (1985), and Dallmayr (1973).

26. Sewell declares his appreciation for Skocpol's widely influential book, particularly for her approach to the problem of multiple causation. He praises her for avoiding both the Scilla of a "hierarchical" strategy which claims the predominance of some single casual factor (e.g., class struggle) over all others and the Charybdis of a "narrative" strategy which simply tries to recount the course of a revolution in some approximation to its concrete complexity. Both these approaches, Sewell agrees with Skocpol, are insufficiently analytic. The narrative strategy treats causes only as they make themselves felt in the development of the story, which makes it hard to grasp their autonomous dynamics, while the hierarchical strategy only examines fully the casual dynamics of one factor. Skocpol, by contrast, approached causation as a matter of "conjunctural, unfolding interactions of originally separately determined processes" (1979, p. 320, n. 16). In particular, Skocpol stressed the independent but interrelated casual importance of class struggle (which she argued had been exaggerated by many previous analysts), state formations, and the international relations (the latter two of which she argues need to figure much more prominently in analyses of revolutions).

27. Again, this can be a macrosociological problem of some importance, for example in studies of nationalism (Anderson 1985; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). In different ways both Shils (1981) and I (Calhoun 1983) have treated tradition as having more of a material social reality, as involving literally the "passing on" of practices or information.

28. Indeed, lack of initiation into the mysteries of kinship analysis has the effect of drastically curtailing the number of societies which comparative sociologists can study.

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