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Cultural sociology at the crossroads of the discipline☆

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Abstract

This article examines two questions. First, what difference does it make when approaches developed in cultural sociology are applied more broadly? We suggest here that such applications subject theoretical assumptions in other sub-fields to investigation, challenge, and development by providing the conceptual resources for empirically linking micro- and macro-analysis: cultural processes, shaping the possibilities and limits of meaning-making, are understood as the practical intersection of structure and agency, the switchpoint between them. Conversely, what do such applications then imply for the further development of cultural sociology? Four issues are highlighted. Empirically, they suggest that cultural sociologists should remedy their under-emphasis of transnational processes, and also that the influence of specialized cultural institutions like art on broader culture processes should be reconsidered. Theoretically, they encourage a renewed emphasis on understanding the causal significance of culture. Finally, the articles here suggest that the proliferation of theoretical concepts in cultural sociology creates a productive ambiguity encouraging the development and diffusion of the field, but also calls for better articulation of the pertinence of divergent analytic tools to particular research problems.
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As many scholars have been claiming in various ways, the "cultural turn" has been one of the most influential trends in the humanities and social sciences in the last generation.

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One of the great institutional successes of this broader scholarly trend has been the creation of cultural sociology as an important and intellectually rich subfield in a discipline in which ''culture'' had not been a founding concept and had relatively little history of explicit theoretical and empirical development.[2] But while it has become routine to celebrate the depth and breadth of recent work in cultural sociology, the broader impact of this work has yet to be assessed. We too believe in the significance and quality of work generated by 'the cultural turn' within sociology (Jacobs and Hanrahan, 2005; Spillman, 2002), but we also ask what difference it makes when approaches developed in cultural sociology are applied beyond its institutional boundaries. This special issue of *Poetics* is designed to explore the possibilities and limitations of integrating cultural analysis with other strands of sociological inquiry.

We take for granted here many of the changes in our understanding of culture which have been established in the work of the last twenty years, by contrast with (what have at least been retrospectively constructed as) more static, overgeneralized, functionalist understandings current in the mid-twentieth century. These developments include (a) reaffirmation of a shared understanding that cultural sociology is not limited to the study of specialized cultural systems such as art, media, or science but rather that it is an analytic perspective on any social arena (b) a shift to analyzing specific meaning-making *processes* from earlier conceptualizations of culture as an integrated whole (c) increasing focus on cognitions, categories, and practices more than values and attitudes (d) an emphasis on the ways in which power relations—both dominance and resistance—are mediated through discourse (e) the analysis of three different elements of cultural process—practices, discourses, and institutionalized cultural production, and (f) a shared understanding that meaning-making processes should not be reduced to properties of individuals, as in the simple use of aggregated survey data, but rather should be investigated as trans-individual processes.

Although there are differences in the degree to which cultural perspectives have been applied to different substantive topics and integrated in other perspectives, their diffusion is now widespread. Work adopting perspectives from cultural sociology has been especially evident among theorists, comparative-historical sociologists, political sociologists, and sociologists of sex and gender—where shared interests have been strong from the beginning (Peterson, 1989). But it is also common in such fields as the sociology of emotions, collective behavior and social movements, race and ethnicity, social psychology, organizations and occupations, the sociology of education, economic sociology, and the sociology of consumption. Moreover, work in cultural sociology is no longer restricted to the adoption of qualitative methodologies, as Mische and White (1998), Martin (2000), Breiger (2002), and Mohr (2005) among others have shown.

In our view, cultural sociology has come into special prominence over the past fifteen years as a field at the crossroads of sociology, especially in the United States context, where the discipline's intellectual field is highly differentiated. Its prominence results from the importance of the disciplinary gaps it has filled. It has arisen, as Philip Smith (1998) and

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[2] Sociology is sometimes contrasted with anthropology, in which ''culture'' became a founding concept and in which theories of culture proliferated. Compare Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1963 [1952]), Kroeber and Parsons (1958), Nisbet (1993 [1966]), and Kuper (1999).

Lyn Spillman (2002) argue at the ''middle range'': as contention over abstract theory reaches a point of diminishing returns, cultural sociology encompasses work that engages on the empirical level such central theoretical issues as agency/structure, macro/micro, constructivism/essentialism, and system/difference. Moreover, it has arisen at a time when increasing specialization produces intellectual fragmentation, as Levine (1995) among others has warned. Sociologists working in diverse specialties have found in ''culture'' a commonplace that connects their work across subfields, in a way that speaks to common theoretical concerns. The articles here, then, are representative of a much broader range of research in which conventions and perspectives from cultural sociology are adopted to refine and develop our understanding of research problems originally formulated in other terms.

At the same time, recent conceptualizations of culture tend to problematize conventions of other established forms of inquiry in sociology and beyond—conventions about what counts as an appropriate research problem, and what counts as appropriate methodology. Research grounded in structuralist analysis, research grounded in the analysis of aggregate population data, and theoretical arguments about macro-level social change may all be challenged from the point of view of conventions developing in cultural sociology. Against this background, we wondered about the possibilities and limitations of integrating cultural analysis in research on topics grounded in other research conventions and perspectives. We wanted to get beyond generic assertions about the importance of culture to examine questions about the specific ways perspectives from or elements of cultural sociology traveled across intellectual borders, what sort of difference they made, what conceptual and methodological barriers they might encounter, and what researchers crossing these intellectual boundaries then added to our understanding of culture itself.

In the remainder of this introduction, we reflect on what contributors to this volume bring from cultural sociology to the analysis of particular research problems—in macro-historical change, contemporary globalization, migration, and in historical scholarship—what difference it makes to the problem, and what the border-crossings then imply for cultural sociology. We suggest that cultural sociology makes a distinctive contribution by providing conceptual tools for handling the intersection of macro-level social dynamics and micro-level subjectivity in meso-level processes. Perhaps surprisingly to some, the result is a distinctively empirical—though not empiricist—sort of argument: building on the examination of cultural processes in concrete contexts, the articles here identify limits and complications to otherwise persuasive macro- or micro-level generalizations in the literatures they address. This empirical sensibility is complemented with an underlying concern to improve our theoretical understanding of the relation between structure and agency by understanding cultural processes as the site of their intersection, the switch point between them. Finally, the papers here also suggest that the application of cultural perspectives across subdisciplinary boundaries places four relatively neglected issues back on the agenda of reflection in cultural sociology: cultural processes operating beyond the confines of the nation-state; the implications of cultural production in specialized arenas such as art for culture more broadly considered; the productive ambiguity inherent in the proliferation of theoretical concepts capturing different dimensions of culture; and the place of causality in cultural analysis.

1. Working at the crossroads of the discipline

Eiko Ikegami imports cultural sociology into the study of a key problem in comparative historical sociology. For the past fifteen years, she has been exploring a grand-theoretical research problem, ''How did such a non-Western society as Japan achieve its own version of modernity without traveling the route taken by Western countries?'' In particular, such Weberian explanations as Robert Bellah's *Tokugawa Religion* (1957) fail to recognize that Western models of modernization cannot apply to Japan because ''the position of religion within a matrix of social relations is clearly very different in Japan, a country in which no single religious sect has ever acquired the gatekeeping power of moral control. '' Ikegami's answer involves ''a trajectory of the relationship between the state, market, and associational life.'' She pursues a ''public-centered analysis,'' which reveals among other dynamics the pivotal roles played by art and poetry circles in early modern Japan, comparable to the roles of civic networks in Western political history.

Steve Derne applies cultural sociology to the study of globalization, examining Hollywood's surprisingly limited effects on the gender roles of non-elite Indian men. India was forced by the conditions of an IMF bailout in 1991 to open its airwaves to the Western media. Yet, ''despite a transformed media world that now celebrated cosmopolitan lifestyles, which included more freedom for women in public spaces and increased autonomy for young men and women in choosing their marriage partners, changes in the gender culture of nonelite, urban, Hindi-speaking men have been relatively modest.'' Derne describes a process in which the institutional realities within which meaning-making processes operate have not changed enough for the men he studies to allow much change in their culture. However, non-elite men did embrace violent or pornographic Western media messages that reinforced existing gender relations, and elite males were more likely to embrace modern Western gender culture because economically they were in a position to do so. This variable pattern of outcomes supports Derne's claim that ''social institutions are the primary anchor of the fit between culture, structure, and psyche.''

Peggy Levitt imports cultural sociology into the study of migration. Her research problem concerns the tensions between ''ways of being'' and ''ways of belonging'' among transnational migrant communities. ''If migrants engage in enduring transnational practices while they put down roots in their host countries, how are they influenced by and how do they make use of multiple cultural repertoires? How does the process of meaning-making change when it occurs across borders?'' This question arises from the assumption—which contradicts previous ones—that ''the incorporation of individuals into nation-states and their enduring transnational connections are not necessarily antithetical to one another.'' For example, Levitt studies how Pakistani-Americans in Massachusetts selectively engage both their American-ness and their Pakistani-ness, using resources of their social class to help forge multi-stranded identities around ties of family, work, and religion. She also explores the case of the Udah Baghats, a sub-caste from the Baroda of Gujarat state in India, to ''highlight the ways in which religious, ethnic, and national cultures, produced in multiple settings and at various levels of social experience are used to rework and create new repertoires that work when groups and organizations are constituted transnationally.''

Barry Schwartz invokes Mannheimian ''standpoint'' theory as well as Durkheimian theories of commemorative ritual and collective memory to study the cultural framework of historical knowledge. Most generally, he explores the ways that ''history'' and ''commemoration'' combine to form collective memory. In particular, he traces successive generations' interpretations of the Gettysburg Address, seeking to understand how today's reading of that address ''as a sacred text'' and ''as a prelude to the civil rights movement'' has so thoroughly transformed Lincoln's own evident intention. In so doing, he demonstrates the power of the synergy between history and commemoration, and challenges Karl Mannheim's optimism about the course of ideological synthesis. Perhaps most profoundly, he identifies the intellectual blinders of our present cultural moment.

2. What difference does cultural sociology make?

In exploring their respective questions, all these authors turn to conventions and perspectives articulated in cultural sociology to identify and address limitations they identify in previous ways their research problems have been formulated. In the process, they demonstrate many of the changes in our understanding of culture noted above.

As in other recent comparative historical work (see Adams et al., 2005), Ikegami seeks a corrective to the structuralist tendency to treat culture as a residual category, or to collapse culture and discourse into the category of social organization—an impulse generated, in part, because ''such new themes as gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity ha(ve) stimulated a new interest in the relationship between politics, culture, and identities.'' But she also challenges the functionalist formulation of the problem of non-Western modernization in terms of values and attitudes, emphasizing instead the ''micro-dynamics of actual cultural practices,'' sustaining and changing social categories and identities as ''meanings take shape through individual actions situated within the structural institutional relationships of a society.'' In her nuanced combination of the three different analytic levels evident in recent cultural sociology, consequential discourses emerge in formerly underestimated practices produced in sites of communication she calls ''publics.'' Notwithstanding her emphasis on agency and fluidity in culture, though, she does not neglect the ways in which the possibilities of meaning-making are powerfully shaped by structural possibilities: ''publics'' may be sources of either reproduction or change. In short, she is adopting new themes in cultural analysis to pursue both an ''ontological understanding of structures, actions, and meanings in their temporal settings'' and an ''epistemological linkage to connect culture with the macro structural analysis without reducing the one to the other.'' In the process, she rearticulates the Durkheimian insight that culture must be viewed as an emergent property and not reduced either to the individuals whose actions produce it or the structure of their networks. As she formulates this insight, identity practices issue from social and cognitive network dynamics. Their emergent property is paradoxical: '' 'nothing new' from an ontological point of view, since they are constructed from existing building blocks, yet 'altogether new' from an epistemological point of view, since they involve qualitatively new structures that cannot even be defined in terms of the old building

blocks.'' Once consolidated, cultural constellations can remain relatively stable for periods, thus acquiring more reified effects in the social world.

Derne seeks a corrective to the tendency to assume that a media deluge somehow automatically transforms institutional practice, thus challenging an otherwise plausible generalization emerging from current theoretical arguments about macro-level social change. His comparisons—between 1991 and 2001, between middle-ranking and affluent Indians, and between American and Indian norms and institutions—suggest that, in this case, at least, the increasingly global circulation of cultural commodities has no immediate or necessary impact on ''indigenous'' cultures in the absence of corresponding changes in employment and consumption. To make this argument, Derne describes a disjuncture between ''local'' cultural practices and identities, and discourses whose institutionalized production lies elsewhere: this differentiated understanding of culture provides a finer grasp on the problem of cultural globalization than earlier approaches in terms of *either* values *or* ideology *tout court*. Whereas earlier functionalist accounts may have explained these men's understanding of family as simply a matter of values, and more critical accounts would tend to emphasize unimpeded adoption of ideology, Derne emphasizes the multiplicity of schemas in all societies, and he goes further to identify *conditions* under which cultural change will happen; what is going on in the institutions structuring individual choices will determine whether or not the increased cultural circulation will change things. Perhaps because the period he treats is shorter than Ikegami's, he emphasizes reproduction over change. He also ''highlights the usefulness of continuing to distinguish the organization of social life from the meanings, rules and norms that guide people to reproduce any social structure.''

Levitt also seeks a corrective to structuralist and functionalist tendencies in her field, which either theoretically marginalized culture with ''rational actor'' models or world-systems models, or assumed that culture was an integrated whole, conflated with ethnicity. For her, cultural sociology ''asks migration scholars to take culture seriously and to pay more explicit attention to the dynamics of meaning-making and boundary construction. It asks us to look not only at the process of adaptation from one culture to another but at what is inside that cultural 'black box' and how it changes over time''.

This allows her to reformulate research problems previously conceptualized in terms of understanding reasons for migration, and processes of immigrant incorporation, to attend both to ongoing transnational dynamics and to the subtleties of the experience of immigrants in new ways. Like Derne and Ikegami, she emphasizes the multiplicity of cultural schemas. She attends to the evidence of practices, and the processes of organized cultural production of transnational religious identity, as well as to discourse about values and attitudes, to show how distinctions constituting immigrant identities are made and re-made. Levitt is thus importing conventions and perspectives from cultural sociology which emphasize processes of meaning-making and the multi-dimensionality of cultural repertoires. Her analysis also demonstrates a sensitivity to the micro-dynamics of power in cultural claims within transnational social fields—power grounded in class position, and generation, as well as cross-border organizational memberships.

Schwartz's essay is perhaps the most audacious, in its ambition to correct not just particular understandings of a specialized sociological topic, but accepted wisdom in American historical scholarship. One of cultural sociology's animating concerns—what

did this really mean to the people involved, and why (usually invoked against analysis of structure or aggregate population data)—is brought to bear even on an arena of intellectual production—history—where those concerns might have been thought to be foundational. A research problem previously defined in terms of contemporary concerns for racial equality is reformulated in terms of the meaning-making processes—at the levels of both production and discourse—characteristic of two very different historical periods. To warrant his own contrarian reading of the Gettysburg Address, he appeals to Geertz's injunction to infer meaning ''by placing words against the context in which they are conceived and spoken.'' His argument that Lincoln's ''brief'' in composing the Gettysburg Address and the ''horizon of expectations'' of his audience (Griswold, 1987) together make late-twentieth century interpretations of the Address highly implausible, along with his detailed symbolic analysis of those later interpretations, turns perspectives and analytic tools common in cultural sociology to the critical task of challenging the idea that ''history'' is epistemologically purer but emotionally thinner than memory, while also challenging the somewhat contradictory assumption that new views of the past are not so much falsifiable as additive.

The otherwise different projects of these four authors share several commonalities in their attack on their respective research problems. Each challenges conceptual generalizations in their areas about the sources, limits, and nature, and extent of social change. Ikegami questions conceptualizations of sources of long-term change in terms of structure or values; Derne questions over-general assumptions about the shorter-term practical impact of macro-level change; Levitt questions conceptualizations of the nature of the changes involved in the migration process; and Schwartz questions the tendency to exaggerate Civil War-era cultural change under the pressure of contemporary concerns. The various overgeneralizations about processes of change are limited or complicated by these authors' reference to their careful empirical examination of practices, discourses, and sites of cultural production which link individual subjectivities to macro-social change through meso-level processes. They use conventions and analytic tools of cultural sociology to make this link empirically, in concrete contexts. Cultural processes, shaping the possibilities and limits of meaning-making, are understood as the empirical location of intersection of structure and agency, the switch point between them. Linking micro and macro empirically, they suggest that the difference cultural sociology makes when it crosses intellectual borders is, in fact, a difference most other sociologists could endorse— it subjects theoretical assumptions to empirical investigation, challenge, and development.

3. Implications for cultural sociology

What does this boundary crossing then mean for cultural sociology itself? We suggest here four themes emerging in these articles which might deserve more widespread attention from cultural sociologists. Two are matters of empirical application, and two are matters of theoretical clarification.

First, Levitt issues a challenge that forces cultural sociologists to stretch their capacities: how, ''when groups rework and expand culture to ensure their survival across space, (do) they set the stage for the emergence of new kinds of norms and institutions which, in turn,

feed back upon ongoing cultural settlements?'' Conversely, Derne might ask cultural sociologists to pay more attention to issues generated by the increasingly global circulation of cultural products. Unlike cultural analysts in anthropology, political science, sub-altern studies, and cultural studies, cultural sociologists, especially in the United States, have conventionally defined their research problems within the confines of nation-states—a convention which operates, of course, as much in cross-national comparison as in single-country studies. While some sociologists of social movements are examining culture in transnational social fields, cultural sociologists have, in general, been slow to reflect on what difference it might make to our research to define our research problems in terms of transnational social fields, and what important arenas of inquiry we are missing in not doing so.[3]

Reflection upon these studies also suggests rethinking the assumption that cultural sociology is not limited to the study of specialized cultural systems such as art, media, or science but rather that it is an analytic perspective on any social arena. This understanding contrasts with earlier, more marginalized, and more delimited programs in the sociology of culture, and, for some time, enabled the luxuriant growth in the subfield. The papers here certainly do not suggest that cultural sociologists should once again restrict their focus to specialized and differentiated cultural systems: however, they do suggest that the tolerant partnership of institutional convenience between, for example, sociologists of art or literature and students of political culture or symbolic boundaries might be placed on a firmer theoretical footing—or, at least, that the relationship might be reconsidered. All these articles involve claims about the implications of specialized arenas of cultural production for ''culture'' understood more broadly—early modern Japanese aesthetic practices become a condition of political modernization, the influence of Western film and cable TV is (initially) blocked by norms more embedded in family and economic structures, religious doctrines and practices both sustain transnational migrant identities and are themselves altered by migration, and histories are produced which articulate contemporary concerns (just as earlier sociologists of knowledge would have it). Bourdieu, of course, theorized an important link between specialized cultural products and broader social processes in *Distinction* (1984)—a link which partially accounts for his enormous influence. But apart from the line of inquiry generated by his work, and Griswold's (2004) transfer of analytic perspectives developed from her work in the sociology of literature to other, less specialized cultural products, there is relatively little regular exchange between sociologists who study art, literature, science, and so on and sociologists interested in less institutionally differentiated culture. However, what these papers suggest is that perhaps we could return to some older questions–Does art change society? When does it do so? When and how does science influence social change (e.g. Goldstone, 2002)?—armed with new analytic insights.

Third, cultural sociologists might also reflect on the implications of the conceptual—or at least terminological—variety in these papers in the dimensions of culture—or elements

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[3] The limits of the continuing conceptualization of research problems in terms of national rather than transnational social fields in American sociology are discussed in Lembo (2000), Foran (2002) and Rajogopal (2002). See also Spillman and Faeges (2005). One exception to this tendency is found in the work of John Meyer and his colleagues: see, for instance, Meyer et al. (1997).

of our theoretical vocabulary—which are adopted to address problems previously formulated in other arenas of inquiry. The contributors to this special issue each employ distinct conceptions of ''culture'' that can nonetheless all be categorized as dimensions of ''meaning-making'' (Spillman, 2002). Ikegami describes the emergence of ''cognitive associational maps'' as properties of network dynamics; for her, culture is structured by ''publics,'' which she defines as ''sites in which actors switch identities and make new social and cognitive network connections.'' Derne describes adherence to traditional norms despite differing media images. Levitt describes the hybridization of cultural repertoires and boundaries within transnational communities. Schwartz describes the symbolic consecration of a selective (indeed fabricated) historical discourse. Cognitive maps; their sites of production; norms and practices; media images; cultural repertoires; boundaries; symbols and discourses: while most cultural sociologists would be at ease with this proliferation of theoretical concepts (which could, of course, be elaborated further), it is worth asking how they are related, and what difference this multi-dimensionality in our understanding of meaning-making processes makes in the diffusion of conventions in the subfield.

Each conception adopted by the authors here is appropriate to the particular research problem at hand; none is superior a priori to the others. Further, the various conceptions in these papers may be translated into each other and made to speak to each other in fruitful ways. Indeed, each of these conceptions could subsume all the others. The cognitive maps that Ikegami claims are properties of social and cognitive networks could easily explain the adherence that Derne observes to traditional gender norms by nonelite Indian males, the mixed cultural repertoires that Levitt observes of Indian- and Pakistani-Americans as well as the family members they have left behind, and the historians' interpretation that Schwartz observes of the Gettysburg Address as a plea for civil rights. Derne's ''way of life'' could explain the samurai and aesthetic cultures that Ikegami observes, as well as the observations of Levitt and Schwartz. Schwartz's very research problem about the extraordinary unanimity exhibited by contemporary historians concerning the Gettysburg Address accords with Levitt's conception of cultural repertoires as ordinarily mixed; Schwartz could explain at least partly as ideologies Ikegami's, Derne's, and Levitt's observations about culture.

Yet translating these conceptions into the terms of the others raises new questions about each one. Ikegami might ask Schwartz to specify the ''public'' dynamics producing the sudden and pervasive switch in historians' representations; in the same spirit, she might ask Derne to further locate Indian resistance to Hollywood messages about gender. Is the relevant public the interactional space between Indian nonelite males and their parents, on whom they depend, or is it the ''virtual'' public of media audiences themselves—that is, might Indian nonelite males make entirely different sense of the Hollywood imagery than their elite counterparts, as Liebes and Katz's *Export of Meaning* (1990) would suggest, so as to obviate intergenerational conflict? What, Derne and Levitt might ask, are the *global* influences on the cultural moments that both Ikegami and Schwartz analyze? Levitt in particular might question Ikegami's assumptions about the relative degrees of within-network and between-network variation in cultural belief. Derne might ask Schwartz to identify how the institutional arrangements (personal and professional) that historians lived with influenced their sudden and dramatic reinterpretation of U.S. history to accord with

the new national culture of civil rights after World War II, despite the persistence of inconvenient historical facts. Schwartz might ask Levitt if the cultural repertoires she describes don't congeal in more ''consistent'' and unanimous discourses in some special institutional circumstances.

Indeed, in the more extended work of all these authors, as well as in book-length exemplars within the field, we are likely to see answers to these types of questions: longer research projects will often synthesize the varying approaches signaled by the varying conceptual apparatus mobilized in the papers here. The simultaneous relatedness and distinctness of the various conceptualizations of dimensions of meaning-making used in these papers at once facilitates and constrains the diffusion of cultural sociology. One advantage of this sort of conceptual differentiation in understandings of culture is that it indicates a productive ambiguity at the very core of cultural sociology, which helps animate the development of the field. Another is that sociologists addressing problems first formulated in other intellectual arenas are offered an array of theoretical tools which might be mobilized according to the problem to be addressed. Their very complementary multi-dimensionality suggests an instructive model of cultural diffusion—including the diffusion of cultural sociology itself as a cultural process. Symbolic ambiguity may be used to mobilize a variety of potentially conflicting constituencies (Kertzer, 1988, p. 69).

On the other hand, sociologists grounded in other perspectives can find the proliferation daunting or confusing, and might legitimately ask for more analytical or terminological clarity. For instance, which concepts are appropriate for research problems specified at different levels of analysis? And what further questions would be raised by addressing a given problem at a different level of analysis? Typically, we would argue, cultural sociologists might take it for granted that meaning-making at the level of the individual may be understood in terms of norms, practices, habitus, identities, situated motives, and categories—though these terms do not simply apply to individual level properties. Meaning-making may also be analyzed in the collective (textual) products of groups, without explicit analysis of the individual subjectivities involved; discourses, symbols, cognitive maps, boundaries, narrative, and cultural repertoires index analytic tools more often wielded in such projects. Sites of collective cultural production involve different meaning-making dynamics than either individual subjectivities or texts; analysis at this level tends to be indexed by reference, for instance, to the organization of media, or the state, or other institutional contexts, but is also suggested in research on subcultures, more temporary or vernacular networks crystallizing connections and resources for collective cultural production (the type of site which Ikegami's elaboration of ''publics'' theorizes further). The conceptual apparatus appropriate at different levels of analysis tends to be intuitive for cultural sociologists, and much of the real innovation in cultural sociology's empirical contributions occurs in the ways these different levels are linked. Nevertheless, sociologists wishing to integrate perspectives from cultural sociology in their analysis of research problems defined by conventions in other subfields may find clarification of those intuitions about concepts appropriate to different types of problems helpful. One issue, then, raised by these papers for cultural sociologists is how to articulate theoretical intuitions about conceptual apparatus appropriate at different levels of analysis for others, while retaining the productive ambiguity that the differentiation in our understanding of various dimensions of culture has created.

Finally, the articles here also suggest that sociologists applying cultural perspectives to problems originally formulated in other terms ''return'' with a renewed emphasis on ''causal'' rather than ''constitutive'' understandings of culture, qualifying cultural sociology's recent tendency to sideline causal arguments in favor of a more general analysis of how cultural objects are constituted and how cultural processes themselves constitute structures and identities. The authors here refer beyond the processes of meaning-making they discuss in their accounts: Ikegami to macro-social structures, Derne to structural constraints on changing norms, Levitt to network structure (''ways of being'') beyond identities (''ways of belonging''), and Schwartz to the ways socio-historical changes affects intellectual production. Derne explicitly amends Sewell's (1992) recipe for potential change (the multiplicity of structures and the transposability of schemas) by emphasizing as well ''the multiplicity of cultural schemas and the transposability of social structures.'' Ikegami also resists an exclusive focus on ''symbolic structure'' (8) at the expense of ''the power of institutions and organizations'' (5), and explicitly qualifies Swidler's celebrated conceptualization of culture as a ''tool kit'' (as has Swidler herself in more detail [2002, pp. 160–180]) by noting the social collaboration required for the exercise of cultural competence, questioning the distinction between ''settled'' and ''unsettled'' periods, and emphasizing the ways that cultural ''tools'' are remade in the process of being used. Of course, the articles here also identify ways in which culture is itself influential—as in the ways Ikegami suggests aesthetic rhetorics condition the emergence of new networks. But regardless of the direction of influence, the overall tendency in the arguments here is to distinguish factors which those who understand culture's role as constitutive, rather than causal, would meld. Whereas investigation into the constitutive role of culture answers ''how'' questions, cultural analysis can also help answer the ''why'' questions implied by causal claims.

Indeed, those who emphasize culture's constitutive role, and design their analyses accordingly, are right to recognize that standard accounts of causality are too thin to encompass some of the forms of knowledge which cultural analysis can provide. However, more nuanced causal epistemologies, though less well known, suggest ways that cultural analysis also makes crucial contributions to causal arguments (Spillman, 2004). For example, cultural analysis often identifies scope conditions or mechanisms of presumed causal relationships, and, since general causal ''laws'' are of limited interest in sociology because of the historicity of social phenomena, understanding of scope conditions and mechanisms of causal claims is central to sociological argument.

The articles here illustrate ways in which cultural analysis can be important in specifying conditions and mechanisms of causal relationships. For Ikegami, early-modern Japanese aesthetic circles and associations provided the mechanism by which flexible horizontal ties and a sense of shared traditions were created, which in turn conditioned the rapid emergence of the of the Japanese nation-state in the mid-nineteenth century. The mechanisms by which vertical authority relations were muted, and conditions for nation-state formation created, were different than those operating in the same processes in the west, so Ikegami is identifying new conditions and mechanisms for theories of the causes of nation-state formation. Derne's argument directly identifies neglected conditions on the operation of a presumed causal relationship between Western media influence and changing gender norms. Levitt unpacks cultural mechanisms in the construction of

immigrant identities, while also pointing beyond them to neglected social-organizational conditions of their formation, in transnational networks. Schwartz's argument challenges contemporary historians' implication that the Gettysburg Address "contributed to the racial integration of American society" (19) with a neat counterfactual question ("what would have happened to American society if Lincoln had made a different speech?" [20]). He also analyzes cultural mechanisms by which collective memory of the Address has been variously constructed, and points to broader social-organizational changes—the "break-down of communal power centers" which "accelerated the country's cultural integration"—which conditioned the emergence of contemporary collective memories and a new relationship between history and memory.

In our view, then, the application here of perspectives and tools from cultural sociology to problems initially formulated in different terms have at least four implications worth further reflection in the development of the sub-field. Empirically, they suggest that cultural sociologists should remedy their over-emphasis on research problems defined within the confines of the nation-state. Another intriguing empirical lead is the suggestion, taking these papers together, that questions about the relation of specialized arenas of cultural production to culture considered more broadly—for instance, questions about the impact of art on society, or questions in the sociology of knowledge—may be worth revisiting. More theoretically, these articles suggest that the proliferation of theoretical concepts in cultural sociology creates a productive ambiguity encouraging the development and diffusion of the field, but also calls for better articulation and communication of the pertinence of different analytic tools to different research problems. Finally, the articles here suggest that as perspectives in cultural sociology are applied to new sorts of research problems, they are used to challenge or improve existing causal arguments by better specifying their conditions and mechanisms. This implies that issues of causality may be worth more explicit attention than they have received in recent culture theory.

4. Conclusion

All provocative and important arguments in their own right, the articles here also help promote reflection on cultural sociology as an intellectual field and the institutional boundaries which shape its diffusion. They show that cultural sociology offers an array of conventions and analytic tools which can be adopted to further the examination of research problems initially formulated in other terms. Variously mobilized, these conventions and analytic tools are used here to develop arguments which suggest limits and qualifications to otherwise persuasive overgeneralizations about social change, arguments which are grounded in concrete empirical examination of meso-level links between individual subjectivity and macro-level structures. In turn, the application of cultural sociology's conventions and analytic tools across subdisciplinary boundaries raises or re-emphasizes for cultural sociologists several important empirical and theoretical issues in our understanding of culture which have recently receded.

Each contribution to this volume not only instantiates the diffusion of cultural sociology, but also explicitly models at least part of the process of that diffusion. Taken together, then,

a synthesis of these models helps formalize the possibilities and limitations of diffusing cultural sociology. The ''crossroads'' of the Section on the Sociology of Culture of the American Sociological Association is one instance of Ikegami's ''public,'' a master site that offers possibilities for ''code-switching'' as different sub-disciplinary networks come into contact with one another. Those contacts, as Levitt emphasizes, are more accurately described as ''multi-sited,'' enabling a hybridization of sub-disciplinary intellectual repertoires, methodological as well as theoretical. The influence of that public is limited, as Derne argues, by institutionalized resistance to new ways of life. Finally, the mix of intellectual repertoires within cultural sociology may well be further channeled by the sort of disciplinary ideology among sociologists that Schwartz describes among historians. Cultural sociology is the disciplinary crossroads where macro and micro, agency and structure, theory and data all meet; bounded by the institutionalized practices of the subdisciplines it gathers together, it is shaped by the very intellectual fields that it helps reshape in turn.

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