3 Cultural Sociology

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Introduction

The concept of culture has been the principal source of theoretical innovation in sociology since the discipline began to fully take its own "cultural turn" starting in the 1980s (Alexander, 1988; Crane, 1994; Friedland and Mohr, 2004; Hall, Grindstaff, and Lo, 2010; Jacobs and Hanrahan, 2005; Jacobs and Spillman, 2005). The core problem of meaning making has inspired several path-breaking and paradigmatic theoretical discoveries and prompted the construction of concepts and categories that have traveled widely throughout the field. It has opened new avenues of empirical research in the discipline, making a significant imprint on nearly every subfield in sociology in a relatively brief space of time. Although theoretical inquiry and empirical investigations of culture in sociology tend to range broadly, it is possible to map theoretical approaches in the field by distinguishing three broad areas of topical concern and application – action, discourse, and production of culture – and their use at different levels of analysis.

Cultural sociology is arguably the subfield in sociology which has been most informed by diverse and interdisciplinary theoretical strands issuing from across the humanities and sciences. Significant theoretical influences include structuralism, hermeneutics, post-structuralism, cognitive neuroscience, phenomenology, and pragmatism, which have focused understandings of the culture concept around issues of internal complexity, active production, and practical use. Most of these themes remained unnoticed or undertheorized in older assumptions about culture in sociology, which tended to theorize culture as a qualitatively homogeneous property of specific groups. The reaction to this overgeneralization was theoretically productive, but the proliferation of conceptual refinements reinforced what Clifford Geertz (1973: 89) once called the "studied vagueness" of the concept, featuring a wealth of valuable references but a potentially baffling analytical eclecticism.

Cultural sociology at present tries to retain the productive comprehensiveness of the culture concept, but combine this with an emphasis on greater theoretical precision and analytical clarity. This often involves efforts to relate and render compatible or contextually specific what had been hitherto disconnected or opposed theoretical approaches to culture (Alexander, 2004; Lizardo, 2017; Patterson, 2014; Spillman, 1995). The conceptual emphasis in the field now tends to revolve around

a synthetic theoretical capital focused on establishing "both/and" frameworks rather than "either/or." This has proven theoretically fruitful in many crucial respects. Yet, in the process, cultural sociologists have tended to lose sight of important multilevel relationships by attending to micro-level processes in their meso-level settings while leaving macro-level cultural processes relatively neglected. To further strengthen cultural theory, sociologists need to strengthen their understanding of longer-term historical persistence, the relation of culture to issues of temporality and ontology, a finer-grained concern with emergent forms of discursive and performative power, and a renewal of macro-level empirical questions.

Elements of Cultural Theory

While the universe of cultural theory in sociology is fluid and expansive, it is possible to define specific dimensions that emerge from the organizing concern with meaning making in the field. These dimensions are action, discourse, and production, which remain irreducible and isolable from each other, but which are, arguably, implicit in any process of meaning making and are often fruitfully synthesized to more broadly specify its mechanisms (Spillman, 2016). Each of these dimensions also serves as the principal "trading zone" (Galison, 1997; Spillman, 2008) between cultural sociology and different theoretical and philosophical perspectives, as well as transdisciplinary arguments incorporated into (and exported from) the discipline. Cultural sociology is a field in which the full variety of theoretical vocabularies, methods, and data sources are brought together, "intercalated," and intermixed. This produces "full-fledged creoles or pidgin" thought styles more characteristic of an "interscience" than a field that trades only within a single disciplinary identity (Galison, 1997: 138).

Action

The action dimension encompasses those approaches to meaning making that foreground issues like interactional styles, cognition, embodiment, and motivation. Some cultural theorizing in this vein emphasizes the significance of group interaction processes in meaning making. Other influential approaches developed over the last few decades have incorporated influences from pragmatism and cognitive science into cultural sociology to deepen theories of individual action in processes of meaning making.

Some cultural theorists emphasize meaning making in group settings, prioritizing interactional process over individual action. For example, Matthew Norton (2014a) theorizes the importance of interactional settings, and for Nina Eliasoph and Paul Lichterman (2003; Lichterman and Eliasoph, 2014), group settings are finely differentiated according to informally generated group bonds, boundaries, and speech norms, and the particularities of these cultural forms shape specific cultural outcomes. This focus on analyzing group-level action has generated new understandings of public culture (Eliasoph, 1998; 2011; Lichterman, 1996; 2005). Conceived

more broadly, attention to theorizing meaning-making processes in group interaction (see Hallett, 2010; Harrington and Fine, 2000) has also emerged in studies of a wide range of other groups, such as congregations (Becker, 1998), restaurants (Fine, 2008), and administrative subdivisions (Binder, 2007).

The classic Parsonian understanding of action as the means-ends "pursuit of ultimate values" has also been challenged through the pragmatist concepts of problem-solving, situational logic, and the creative construal of means and ends (Parsons, 1935; Parsons and Shils, 1951). This approach develops Ann Swidler's (1986; 2001a) influential argument against values as ends of action and in favor of the more flexible concept of cultural repertoires. For instance, in Richard Biernacki's (2002: 81) formulation, action consists of a "creative construal" that transposes schemas and tools between situations to solve meaningful problems. The "felicitous interplay between a puzzle and its solution" replaces "means-ends goal direction" as the primary model system of action, redefining how action serves as a locus of meaning making (see also Gross, 2009; Strand and Lizardo, 2015).

A similar reformulation has resulted from the inclusion of cognitive science into theories of action in cultural sociology. Unconscious mechanisms and processes (like schemas), new typologies and distinctions (public and private culture, "dual-process" models), and embodiment have all been new and ongoing points of focus for cultural sociologists (Cerulo, 2001; DiMaggio, 1997; Lizardo, 2014). Over the last several decades, the emergence of cognitive science has redefined the nature of cognition away from a classical focus on "internal symbol manipulation" toward a new emphasis on perception, embodiment, emotion, and the relation between motor capacities and higher-level cognitive processing (Ignatow, 2007; Lizardo and Strand, 2010; Shepherd, 2011; Vaisey, 2009). For cultural sociologists, action as the principal trading zone drawing these insights into the field has contributed to the development and resonance of concepts like habitus, practice, and cognition.

Building from the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1984; 1990), the concept of habitus has had a paradigmatic influence on research on topics like cultural taste, social class, education, and embodiment (Lamont and Lareau, 1988; Lareau, 2003; Lizardo, 2006; Wacquant, 2015). Bourdieu emphasizes the connection between habitus and "cognitive structures" that contribute most of all to an understanding of culture in action that is nonsymbolic and not consciously accessible or reportable. This offers a basis to critically revise traditional understandings of action that emphasize symbolic systems and consciously accessible meanings. The revisionist perspective has sparked debates in the field not only concerning the conceptual efforts to analytically respecify the nature of action, but also concerning issues of measurement and methodology, particularly the contrast between the more deliberate format of interview methods and the less deliberate measures of culture involving fixed-choice questions or large-N longitudinal patterns (Pugh, 2013; Vaisey, 2014).

Production of Culture

The production dimension of cultural sociology focuses on culture as a product in which the "mundane" influences of organizational context, legal infrastructure, and

economic circumstances impact meaning making. As a trading zone, the production of culture has been a principal conduit for drawing insights, concepts, problematics, and frameworks from a variety of allied sociology subfields into cultural sociology, including organizations, networks, and the sociology of work, each drawing attention to factors that, alone or in combination, constrain or facilitate the nature and content of symbolic products.

Richard Peterson (1976) and Diana Crane (1976; 1992) pioneered the production-of-culture approach by drawing principles from organizational theory to emphasize how industry and organization structure, law and regulation, technology, and occupational careers impact the context in which culture is produced. This context directly affects innovation and diversity in popular culture (DiMaggio, 1982; Lopes, 1992; Peterson, 1997), and potentially affects the symbolic content of culture, as in Wendy Griswold's (1981) argument about the impact of copyright law on American literature. Paul Hirsch's (1972) paradigmatic early framework emphasized the "organization-set" and a multistage "flow" process that dictated the way in which organizations produced cultural products like books, films, and music. As Hirsch emphasized early on, a generalized uncertainty about reception plagues the production of culture and this generates a variety of organizational responses in terms of how (and how much) culture is produced by organizations. Scholars have further reiterated this claim, specifying more precisely the mechanisms that compensate for uncertainty (Bielby and Bielby, 1994).

Theorizing about social networks in cultural sociology has taken a variety of different forms. Important among them is the influence of social capital and "small worlds" on the production of culture. Eiko Ikegami (1998) broke new ground in this area with her study of "aesthetic networking" in the Tokugawa period of Japanese history around the *za* arts. This not only produced a flourishing aesthetic culture, but cultivated a civic sociability that was an important contributing factor to the dynamic political changes of the Tokugawa period. Social networks as a context for the production of culture have also been demonstrated in relation to world philosophy (Collins, 1998), Broadway musicals (Uzzi and Spiro, 2005), jazz music (Kirschbaum, 2015), and civic political communication (Mische and Pattison, 2000) to name just a few.

Fields have also emerged as a key structuring context for the production of culture, based largely on the groundbreaking work of Bourdieu (1993). The structure of field consists of relationally defined, competitive positions and "capital" as a dimension of power that dictates the symbolic content of cultural products and a hierarchical and quasi-hegemonic production context. The relative autonomy of fields is linked to the distinctiveness and transferability of their capital in relation to the larger social space and field of power. Fields as a context for the production of culture have been demonstrated in fashion (Mears, 2011), journalism (Benson, 2013), and poetry (Buyukokutan, 2011).

Institutions, meanwhile, have consistently been at the forefront of cultural theorizing within the sociology of organizations, and theorizing about institutions in cultural sociology has been innovative by helping integrate theories of networks and fields (Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury, 2012). Indeed, the core concept of

"institution" as consisting of both "patterns of activity" and "symbolic systems" often serves as a bridging concept in the field (Friedland and Alford, 1991: 232). Empirical investigation in both world-polity institutionalism (Meyer et al., 1997) and institutional field theory (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Fligstein and McAdam, 2012) has revealed strong tendencies for isomorphism to be transmitted through processes of meaning making, though isomorphism should not be understood to exclude local variation, change, and emergence (Clemens, 1997; Dobbin, 1994; Schneiberg and Clemens, 2006).

Discourse

The third irreducible dimension of cultural analysis involves the nature of cultural forms, and their expression of and influence on social life. Theories of cultural form have been a "trading zone" incorporating semiotic and structuralist theory, theories of performance, and material influences on meaning making. Arguably cultural sociology's most distinctive theoretical contribution, compared to other sociological perspectives, is its attention to the independent influence of cultural form on social action.

This became evident in the early application of "structuralist hermeneutics" to redefine the culture concept (Alexander and Smith, 2006; 1993), along with associated arguments by Jeffrey Alexander and his collaborators that emphasized the irreducibility of meaning making to social, political, or economic influences. This perspective maintains that both action and the production of culture *presuppose* cultural forms as a "landscape of meaning" (Reed, 2011). For example, the influence of semiotic presuppositions in the course of social relations has been investigated extensively in cases of scandal (Alexander, 1984; Reed, 2007), electoral outcomes (Alexander, 2004), social movements (Kane, 1997), state policy (Norton, 2014b; Smith, 2005), health-related sexual behavior (Tavory and Swidler, 2009), and innovation in industries (Weber, Heinze, and DeSoucey, 2008). From a different perspective but in a similar vein, Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thevenot (2006) analyze historically widespread situational logics and conventions of agreement constructing social relations.

Theories of performativity linking semiotic forms directly with action have offered further innovations for the analysis of cultural forms in social processes. Drawing from a broad synthesis of theories of performance and performativity, including those of Erving Goffman (1956), Judith Butler (1999), and Victor Turner (1974), but also theatrical studies by Richard Schechner (1977), Jeffrey Alexander (2004) offers a historically grounded theory of cultural performance in modernity. Meanwhile, Isaac Reed (2013) develops a theory comparing discursive and performative power as *sui generis* dimensions of power not reducible to material sources of power. These perspectives have enriched the study of social power in a variety of forms and manifestations, including its democratic expressions. For example, Alexander (2010) and Jason Mast (2013) offer rich analyses of conventional political power in the Obama and Clinton presidencies (respectively) in terms of cultural performance.

Contemporary cultural theorists are also exploring the influence of the material properties of cultural objects on meaning-making processes. Chandra Mukerji's (1997) study of the Garden of Versailles as a piece of material culture, with its elaborate earthworks, intricate architectural and engineering design, and immense wildlife preserve, is exemplary here. As Mukerji argues, the Garden's design reveals material practices that refigure the natural world for political effect, in this case generating a "naturalized" political territoriality assumed by the French state under King Louis XIV. Meanwhile, Terence McDonnell (2016, 2010) has developed a novel perspective on cultural materiality that draws on the notion of "cultural entropy" to emphasize the integral relation between materiality and variant interpretations of cultural objects. Dominik Bartmanski and Jeffrey Alexander (2012) also offer a theoretical approach for understanding the interplay of meaning and materiality in specifically iconic symbols. In each of these treatments, the materiality of cultural objects acts as a store for symbolism, energy, and forms of value that affect distinct sensory experiences of meaning making and communication (see Griswold, Mangione, and McDonnell, 2013). Perhaps ironically, as the material basis of symbol production becomes more remote from daily knowledge and experience, cultural theory is now reconsidering materiality.

All of these approaches emphasize the internally structured nature of cultural forms as sociologically significant over and above practical action and organized production in meaning making. They generate empirical analyses of the relative autonomy of culture, featuring specific informal logics, creative applications, and meaningful entailments. A discursive focus on cultural form in particular allows sociologists to offer specific analysis of "just how culture interferes with and directs what really happens" (Alexander and Smith, 2006: 14).

Lines of Synthesis

Clearly, there are many points of divergence between cultural theorists emphasizing action, production, or cultural forms, but these should not cloud the many points of synthesis between them, which have proven fruitful in recent years for using culture to solve empirical puzzles in a variety of topical areas and for developing new empirical questions. Much of this work integrates multiple levels of analysis, using concepts like fields, backgrounds, landscapes, and networks to situate micro-level phenomena within meso- and macro- contexts. Less common are efforts to synthesize levels in the *opposite* direction, from macro-levels to micro- and meso-levels.

Action and Cultural Production

The points of synthesis between action and production have revolved around concepts like fields, organizations, and networks and how these have shaped, and been shaped by, conventional "action"-related phenomena, like cognition, taste, decision-making, and interaction. Those studies that focus on these action phenomena in spaces of cultural production yield unique insights about how culture is produced by

extending beyond the organization as the unit of analysis. Fields and social networks deploy an analogous theoretical logic in this respect, as they both emphasize the situatedness of action within larger social spaces.

A prominent example of this style of argument draws from field theory. Bourdieu's pioneering work on fields of cultural production emphasizes how cultural production takes place through action as "position-taking" by culture producers in a field structured by social relations. Bourdieu's (1996) own most prominent example involves a detailed "socio-analysis" of the writer Gustave Flaubert and how his aesthetic modernist ethic, "write the mediocre well," was a position-taking that tied together the contraries of "social art" and "bourgeois art." As Bourdieu argues, aesthetic modernism as a "generative formula" for the production of culture was not invented out of whole cloth by culture producers in literature, painting, and music. Rather, it was a "position to be made" in a field that historically situated culture producers. Its invention did not cause the autonomy of artistic fields but was symptomatic of changing social conditions for cultural production that allowed for greater field autonomy.

Subsequent examinations of fields as the structuring context for cultural production have drawn these arguments together with organizations as the context for cultural production (Boschetti, 1988; Spiro, 2013). Locating a "field effect" on cultural production remains the point of focus in research on fields that ranges far beyond Bourdieu's initial empirical focus on literature and painting. Monika Krause's (2014) study of NGOs and humanitarian relief is exemplary here. Krause reveals a transnational social field that shapes the "production of projects" by NGOs competing for a field-specific capital defined by the attention and resources given by institutional donors to humanitarian causes. Humanitarian intervention is not a direct logical extension of humanitarian principles but is subject to the (fragmented) representation of aid-worthiness by NGOs, a process which formally resembles the logic of cultural production because it exercises a field effect on the distribution of outcomes.

The synthesis of social networks with cultural production provides for a similar analytic focus in serving as a meso-level context for action phenomena (Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1994; McLean, 2016). Indeed, the further synthesis of networks with cultural production has led to a host of creative insights. Following the pioneering work by Diana Crane (1975) and Charles Kadushin (1974) on the role of creative networks in science, art, and intellectual life, network approaches have extended further into the production of culture by identifying multiply nested interpersonal-influence networks that affect both production and reception (Childress, 2017; Childress and Friedkin, 2012). Action phenomena like interaction, cognition, and judgment exercise a mutual influence over social networks and the composition of social groups as sites for aesthetic judgment and status evaluation (Erickson, 1996; Fuhse, 2009; Lizardo, 2006; Srivastava and Banaji, 2011; Wohl, 2015).

More broadly, the generative force of interaction in producing durable inequalities is uniquely revealed in cultural sociology that draws together all three dimensions of culture. Lauren Rivera's (2015) study of hiring decisions at elite professional

services firms is an example. Hiring decisions are shaped by signals of cultural capital (class-based skills and presentation styles) that are an extension of economic privilege. Here Rivera extends the literature on the cultural reproduction of economic advantage into an organizational sociology of hiring practices. What is particularly novel about the study is how hiring decisions at elite firms are not only action phenomena but also serve as sites of cultural production, in this case about the discourse of what is "meritorious" and the contours of the symbolic boundaries that it generates.

Cultural Production and Discourse

The intersection of cultural production and discourse is also a significant point of focus for cultural sociology, as organizations, fields, and networks all serve as production venues for trans-individual discourses, knowledge, and policies. As anchoring points for discourse, cultural production venues of multiple sorts allow sociologists to specify in detail the processes of discursive change and patterns of broader circulation and resonance. Synthetic work here is more attuned to phenomena at the macro-level and large-scale patterns of meaning making than other types of synthesis.

Christina Simko's (2015) examination of public consolation in the aftermath of collective traumas like September 11 demonstrates these lines of synthesis. In this scenario, politicians become sources of cultural production as they fulfill cultural expectations to apply existing narratives and other cultural tropes to provide existential guidance during times of crisis, often by invoking collective memories. This sort of "consolation discourse" operates at a trans-individual level and is capable of reaffirming collective identities through the deployment of cultural forms. Here, politicians are the "carrier groups" reproducing larger and longer-term cultural narratives about collective trauma (Alexander et al., 2004).

The relation between discourse, cultural production, and policy has been a significant focus for cultural sociologists at least since Frank Dobbin's (1994) groundbreaking comparative study of industrial policy in Great Britain, the United States, and France. The dialectic between policy implementation and what is pre-established as "culturally conceivable" in a political context specifies in detail the role that cultural discourse plays in policy making. This research site includes the stages of conception of social policy concerned with anti-poverty protocol and the behavioral discourses that inform historical variation in the resonance of ideas about the causes of poverty, including culture itself (Guetzkow, 2010; Lamont and Small, 2010; Small, Harding, and Lamont, 2010). A production-of-culture perspective applied to "poverty knowledge" reveals how trans-individual discourses are marshaled by professional knowledge producers to shape and direct social policy in ways consistent with certain moral assumptions (O'Connor, 2010; Rodriguez-Muniz, 2015).

Cultural elites as influencers of tastes, dispositions, and cultural development have long been a point of reference for sociologists (Khan, 2012). More recently, elite social spaces have been recognized as sites of production for cultural discourse. In

Shamus Khan's (2011) study of an exclusive New England prep school, the problem of how to embody privilege despite anti-inequality and meritocratic discourse makes for a production-of-culture problem concerned with the redefinition of elite social status. In this circumstance, "privilege" is symbolically transformed from being a set of birth advantages leveraged for elite social reproduction to being a quasi-naturalized capacity to be successful in competitive environments that subsequently elides durable inequality. The school serves as an organizational context for the production of strategies and discourses that preserve privilege and advantage, despite growing resistance to the relentless extension of social inequality.

Discourse and Action

Lines of synthesis between discourse and action have proven to be among the most theoretically fruitful in sociology in recent years, as sociologists explore the role that cultural forms of various sorts (semiotic, cognitive, material) play in action and interaction. Dual-process models, performativity, motivation, cognition, and institutions have proven to be important venues for theoretical reformulations that synthesize action and discursive processes. In recent years, pragmatism, cognitive science, and science studies have all offered conceptual resources that break new ground at the intersection of meaning making and action, dealing with cross-domain mechanisms and processes that translate across different subfields.

A kind of Weberian revitalization is one direction of synthesis between discourse and action, as theorists have examined the way discourses shape internal mental states and motivations, thus linking the macro with the micro in novel formulations (Reed, 2011). The subjective moment of action from this perspective takes the form of beliefs and desires, but these are amorphous, "like melted bronze before it is poured into a case and allowed to harden into a real statue" (Reed, 2011: 158). Beliefs and desires may be conscious or subconscious, accessible to inquiry or not, but what is consequential for understanding action is the wider landscape of meanings that shape their expression (Pugh, 2013). Challenges to this view emphasize the importance of practical consciousness and preconscious dispositions in action (Lizardo and Strand, 2010; Vaisey, 2009). They have inspired finer-grained distinctions between personal and public, declarative and non-declarative types of culture (Lizardo, 2017; Patterson, 2014), and have reintroduced the distinction articulated here between culture as discourse and culture as action.

The strong revival of pragmatism, combined with the influence of science studies and sociological traditions of practice theory (Bourdieu, 1990; Reckwitz, 2002) have drawn increased attention to social practices as points of convergence between action and discourse (Camic, Gross, and Lamont, 2011; Lizardo and Strand, 2010; Swidler, 2001b). As public "ensembles of patterned activities," social practices provide an access point for understanding the meanings that motivate and render action "surprisingly regular" or patterned (Martin, 2011). Semiotic codes also articulate (or "suture together") preestablished practical understandings in ways that construct resonant cultural categories and "the social" as a built environment (Sewell, 2005). A more interactionist approach focuses on the semiotic spaces that locate action

along discursively coded axes that signify and "give off" public meanings (Tavory and Swidler, 2009). Discourse and action are mutually specified here in ways that reveal their interconnection with the expression of both desired identities and "summoned" identities that surpass intended meanings (Tavory, 2016).

Ellen Berrey's (2015) study of the post–Civil Rights translation of racial progress as "diversity" brings many of these points together in a novel synthesis. Over the last thirty years, social policy focused on racial inequality has arrived at "selective inclusion" as a set of practices, social relationships, and symbolic constructs that signify diversity but pose little risk to established power structures. As a discourse, diversity articulates with moral identity as the desire not to discriminate against cultural difference, but this gives only certain ideas influence and "leaves advocates without a language for talking about inequality" (2015: 9). The institutional resonance of diversity discourse in universities and corporations and among local housing authorities in Berrey's study effectively precludes the advancement of a "radical race-class transformation" that could challenge the prevailing institutional logics and practices that reproduce racial domination.

Materiality has also become a point of focus for investigating relations between cultural forms and action in ways analogous to practice. McDonnell's (2016) study of anti-AIDS media campaigns in Ghana is exemplary of this trend. The materiality of the cultural objects at the center of these campaigns (posters, condoms, billboards) is basic to their communication of meaning and the larger effectiveness of campaign messages. Using a novel adaption of the thermodynamic concept of entropy, McDonnell emphasizes the materiality of meaning as revealing the "entropic unravelling" of cultural objects through unexpected usage and application (e.g. condom rings as bracelets). Cultural objects *as* (material) objects synthesize action and discourse as co-equal moments in meaning making (McDonnell, 2010). Combined with pragmatism, materiality makes the semiotic and practical "resonance" of cultural objects a critical mechanism (McDonnell, Bail, and Tavory, 2017; see also Boltanski and Thevenot, 2006).

Cultural Theory: From Meso/Micro to Macro/Meso

Cultural sociology has been uniquely concerned with drawing together phenomena at different units of analysis from the micro, meso, and macro. Issues generated by these efforts include how to "measure culture" (*Theory and Society*, Ghaziani and Mohr, 2014) questions of realism and ontology (Archer, 1995) and the problem of historical emergence. In recent years, micro/meso connections have been the most active area of synthesis, as fields and networks increasingly become meso-level research sites for explaining micro-level phenomena like action and cognition. However, this leaves unanswered questions about meso/macro connections, particularly ones that involve historical emergence and the historical persistence of fields.

Since cultural forms may be involved in many different settings over time, analysis of discourse is uniquely attuned to drawing meso/macro connections that counter the tendency to presuppose the existence of meso-level orders (like fields). It

provides a way to account for the appearance of meso-level phenomena as parts of historical "formation stories" that capture a variable ontology (Hirschman and Reed, 2014). Philip Gorski (2013) provides a model of field emergence that emphasizes the discursive construction of "ultimate value" as a necessary accompaniment to the genesis of social fields. Shai Dromi's (2016) analysis of the nineteenth-century appearance of the humanitarian field demonstrates the appeal of discourse as a macro-level influence on meso-level orders like fields. He reveals how a very specific strand of Calvinist doctrine shaped the genesis of the humanitarian field through the efforts of activists associated with the International Red Cross. Michael Strand (2015, 2017) offers a similar analysis of the genesis of a field. Here, civil discourse and its early nineteenth-century moral coding of capitalist practices provides a co-determinant mechanism alongside multiply intersecting sets of social relations for the appearance of a field of social justice in late-nineteenth-century England.

The analysis of discourse also serves as a research focus that links lower-level meso or micro effects to macro-level explanations. Here the connection of discourse to social context and the structuring effects of organizations is a main point of focus. Christopher Bail (2014) explains the emergence of anti-Muslim discourse in the wake of September 11 as part of the evolution of a discursive field. Anti-Muslim "fringe organizations," and their fringe tendency to rhetorically deploy fear and anger, exercise a "gravitational pull" on the field that restructures the doxic contours of Muslim discourse in civil society (see also Berezin, 2009 on the influence of the far right in Europe). In the process, discourse reorganizes meso-level interorganizational networks. Gabriel Abend (2014), in his argument about the history of business ethics, shares similar concerns with discursive emergence. Here business ethics appears in America through the convergence of several discursive streams in the eighty years between the middle of the nineteenth century and the Great Depression. In Abend's argument, business ethics emerges as a "para-moral" element found in a second-order (macro) background that is presupposed by the first-order (meso/micro) morality of beliefs, behaviors, and norms that apply to evaluations and judgments of "good businesspeople."

These examples are consistent with Isaac Reed's (2011) broader theoretical concern with "landscapes of meaning" as the discursive spaces "upon which . . . human beings emerge [with] subjective motives that force action forward" (2011: 152). Landscapes of meaning provide a macro-level of discourse that is foundational in its extended effects on meaning making across time and space. It also provides a cultural model for causal explanation by identifying the effects of landscapes at the meso-level, through formation stories of social and cultural orders, and at the micro-level, by providing "forming causes" of action as explicit reasons and unconscious drives and desires. Arrangements of meaning and representation shape (or "form") the forceful causation exercised by mechanisms.

Social practices can play a similar role to that of macro foundation. Richard Biernacki's (1995; see also Alexander, 2002; Swidler 2001b) comparative study of labor in Britain and Germany from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries

demonstrates how. Here, different practices of commodifying labor between the two countries (commodification of labor power in Germany; commodification of labor products in Britain) served as pragmatic "anchor" points for a variety of cultural forms (see also Swidler, 2001b). The practical "category of labor" systematically conveyed meanings at the meso- and micro-levels, affecting phenomena ranging from capital investments and workers' arguments about exploitation, to economic analyses (including Marx), perceptions of time, labor movement repertoires, and even the architectural design of factories.

Whether a discursive landscape or an anchoring practice serves in the role, macro foundations like these that extend across space and time and help explain both historical emergence and historical persistence – not to mention specifying cultural difference – are relatively neglected points of focus for cultural sociologists. The major difference between discourse and practice as ways of revealing the effects of macro-level cultural forms in this case is that discursive approaches tend to examine in detail the systematic components of these long-lasting cultural forms, while practice approaches tend to highlight the "experiential contexts and concrete histories of acquisition" that dictate the degree and type of systematicity that apply to them (Lizardo, 2017: 100; Sewell, 2005). More specifically, a focus on practice reveals historical configurations of practical activity in which culture is found in a "practical relation to the world" not mediated by explicit meanings or representations (Bourdieu, 1990: 27; Martin, 2011).

Drawing these arguments about macro-level foundations together with questions of temporality leads us to ask whether there might be multiple temporalities at work in social action, loosely in line with what Paul Ricoeur (1974) suggested as the "background" temporality of structure, combined with what we might refer to (following Sewell, 2005) as the "eventful" temporality of hermeneutics. In this case, a macro landscape or anchoring practice provides temporally persistent conditions of possibility for meso and micro phenomena. These are more proximately shaped by contingent events to produce specific formulations ("interpretations" in Ricoeur's terms) of what is available in the macro-level background. Meanwhile, the potential for "restless events" (Wagner-Pacifici, 2010) suggests a unit of analysis that allows cultural sociologists to understand how foundational discourses and practices can themselves be reorganized.

Because micro/meso syntheses have been the most active research site, cultural sociology still affords only a limited understanding of how meaning making occurs trans-situationally. Yet, meso-level situations and contexts remain critical units of analysis for cultural sociologists, not least because they serve as key empirical reference points for demonstrating macro-level influences on culture (Norton, 2014a; Strand and Lizardo, 2015). Two examples from economic and cultural sociology demonstrate how to draw non-reductive connections between macro-, meso-, and micro-levels by taking situations, contexts, and organizations as meso-level empirical research sites.

Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thevenot (2006) treat "critical situations" as integral points of synthesis between macro, meso, and micro phenomena. Here, macro-level and trans-situational "grammars" of social bonds or different "orders of worth"

convey justifications that can start and end disputes and construct and reconstruct social bonds, through moral meaning making. In critical situations these grammars become evident in claims-making by actors seeking to construct justifiable denunciations and proofs. Political philosophy serves as a formal articulation of different grammars as sets of logically related propositions that mimic the form of everyday ("pragmatic") denunciations. Meanwhile, the micro-level exercise of "critical capacities" is brought into relief by critical situations, which Boltanski and Thevenot (2006) use to reflexively situate sociology and economics as themselves positive referents for moral grammars that construct social bonds.

Also linking macro- and micro- through meso-level contexts, Lyn Spillman's (2012) study examines trade associations as sites for the production and transmission of "business culture." The associations serve as points of articulation for reproducing a macro-level culture structure or discursive "grammar" that allows for the construction of vocabularies of motive and strategies of action whose solidaristic focus deviates from economistic assumptions about innate economic self-interest. The associations also serve as venues for meaning making in action as members acquire the business culture necessary for economic agency.

Increased attention to macro-level discourses and practices underpinning meso-level contexts and micro-level action seems particularly important if we are to further develop theories of cultural power. The synthesis between cultural theory and theories of power has arguably been a major focus ever since Steven Lukes (1974) identified a "third dimension" of power as the power to shape cognitions, preferences, and actions. Bourdieu's (1993) notion of "symbolic power" as naturalizing inequality is similar in its synthesis of misrecognition and perceptions of legitimacy. Recently, Reed (2013) has argued that this third dimension of power, or *cultural* power, operates through three distinct mechanisms: relational, discursive, and performative. He suggests that these cultural mechanisms serve as "forming" causes, setting the grounds and conditions for particular power relations that exercise "forceful" causes. More generally, this makes culture an integral part of an understanding of social ontology that focuses on the historical emergence of distinct social kinds with "causal powers" (Hirschman and Reed, 2014).

Conclusion

Cultural sociology remains at the forefront of theoretical discussions in sociology at large, not least because of the encompassing nature of culture as an object of research and the ambiguities that persist about it. Under the guise of cultural theory, sociology has been influenced by a range of broader theoretical and empirical trends, and it continues to be a trading zone between sociology and theoretical discourses from a wide range of different sources. Cultural sociology remains a subfield that often attracts the theoretically adventurous, and it is not surprising that most general theoretical debates are at least indirectly relevant to culture. Indeed, in many cases, they are directly inspired by the issues that circulate within it.

As we've argued, cultural sociology can be distinguished into three dimensions of meaning making: action, production of culture and discourse. Research in the subfield can be specified on these terms, and the new research in the subfield can be understood as different and novel integrations of these different types of cultural sociology. This helps overcome the prior "studied ambiguity" of the concept that Geertz (1973) noticed early on, and it remains a fruitful theoretical endeavor to draw more distinctions, to decipher more analytically specific frameworks, to draw further boundaries within culture, that clarify the concept even more. The argument here is that blanket generalizations about culture or dismissals of it for its lack of fixed precision are theoretically retrograde.

Issues on the horizon of cultural sociology include further advancements in those that have remained consistent points of focus, including discourse, production of culture and action, and those that have driven innovation in the subfield over the last couple of decades, including cognition, performativity, and meso-level production contexts like fields and networks. Newer issues that should gain a greater foothold in the field in the future include materiality, power, ontology, temporality, and (we claim) levels of analysis. The latter might not seem as theoretically novel as the former set of issues, but we argue that paying specific attention to distinctions between macro-, meso-, and micro-level phenomena, and placing cultural forms at each of these levels, remains a theoretically productive endeavor.

What becomes especially clear is the highly active area of drawing meso/micro relationships with concepts like fields and networks and their impact on action and cognition. What also becomes clear is the relative dearth of research that explores the effects of macro phenomenon on meso and micro phenomenon. This level of analysis presses the culture concept into the terrain of temporality and questions about emergence and persistence, and the arguably slower-moving timescale of macro cultural forms in comparison with the more eventful temporal horizons found at meso- and micro-levels.

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