Reflections on *Talk of Love*--East Coast and West

Although you will find in this issue a message from the chair, Robin Wagner-Pacifici, it takes a different form than the customary "Message from the Chair." Rather, for this special issue about Ann Swidler's seminal *Talk of Love* , Robin contributes one of the four "criticisms" of Ann's book. Robin and Viviana Zelizer were among the participants in an "author meets critics" panel organized by Jerry Jacobs at the 2003 meetings of the Eastern Sociological Society; Paul Lichterman and Isaac Reed were among the participants in a similar panel organized by Neil Gross at the 2003 meetings of the Pacific Sociological Association. Ann has composed a reflective response to these four critics. I hope you agree that the set of papers printed here represent a productive (indeed exemplary) instance of scholarly dialogue. As always, please let me know what you think, and send me your ideas for contributions to future issues.

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It's a great honor to be asked to comment on the work of Ann Swidler, whose signal contributions to sociology, particularly in the realm of theory and the sociology of culture, have so influenced my own thinking and teaching.

Talk of Love is a book that explores something of a *species mystery* – the mystery of love – while its focus is on *talk* of love (the way that people assess their own feelings and relations), it nevertheless inevitably circles around the question of love itself. What is love? Love seems to live in the world of the ineffable, the singular, a world only poets grasp dimly. So Ann's project is doubly daring – to approach sociologically a mystery and to ask how such a mystery is socially constituted, communicated and institutionalized. And maybe one

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LOVE HIKERS DON'T WALK ALONE

Ann Swidler provides a striking image of the task she sets for herself in *Talk of Love*. "Think of an actor" she suggests:

> as a hiker ascending a mountain, with culture as her description of the path she follows. The mountain's topography will certainly affect her route. She will pay attention to a boulder she must cross or go around, to steep or flat places, to openings in the trees. But other features of the

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"How culture matters" and "does culture matter"?

Talk of Love is an important agenda-setting statement for sociologists of culture, written by one of our field's most prominent people. This is a book about "how culture matters," as the book's subtitle puts it. The question motivates some of our most exciting, current theoretical debates.

The unstated assumption here is that culture does work, that cultural patterns exist and are worth studying. I want to observe that this assumption is not entirely shared outside the

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LOVE AND THEORY: OTHER WAYS CULTURE COULD MATTER

For Ann Swidler, the interviews she analyses in *Talk of Love* are evidence affirming her toolkit model of culture since they manifest the inconsistencies, contradictions, and shifting frames of speech and action that such a theory would lead us to expect. And undoubtedly, her notion of toolkit, particularly well expressed in the phrase that "we do best to think of culture as a repertoire, like that of an actor, a musician, or a

way to understand the oscillating nature and terms of the interviewees' responses to questions about love is to acknowledge the difficulty of *communicating the singular*. But of course the singular is built out of the conceptual bits and pieces of available culture – this being precisely Ann's point. And the oscillations here are systematic: is love personal and private or collective and public? Is it idiosyncratic and singular or social and general? Is love born fully clothed like Athena from Zeus' forehead, or does it emerge slowly, over time? Is love a choice or is it a compulsion?

The main oscillation discerned and analyzed by Ann is that which frames love as either mythic and romantic or prosaic and a lot of work (these two alternatives aligning with unsettled and settled periods in the individuals' lives). And this is the alternating vision of love that I find most startling and that makes the book so revelatory. For while Ann notes that even prosaic, everyday notions of love require heroic commitment, I would counter that even the most romantic representations of love communicated by the interviewees come across as exceedingly unmysterious, logical and, most shocking of all, platonic. To put it concisely, and somewhat metonymically, there is no sex in this book (no sex, no lust, no physical passion). Of course, this is America (and, as Ann specifies her subjects in the book, a middle-class, mostly white, mostly religiously observant, mostly heterosexual America). So the platonic talk of love in the book must reflect at least that aspect of American culture that separates love, even romantic love, from lust, separates love from sex. The single real meditation on sexual relations in the book comes in one interviewee's discussion of his life after divorce when he actually makes a contrast between love and "being friends with someone leading to sexual relationships". The latter situation of friendship leading to sex is one that the interviewee retrospectively looks upon disparagingly. So what to make of a reference to sex that casts sex in such a negative light? And that understands the nexus of friendship and sex as insincere or contaminated? And what to make of the fact that sex comes up so infrequently in all the talk of love?

I was thinking about the platonic model of love that Ann has discerned in her study, platonic even when romantic – thinking about the overwhelmingly looming institution and ideal state of marriage and the teleological way that the love talk aims (either prospectively or retrospectively) towards marriage. And then, under duress and the influence of adolescents, I watched "The Bachelor." If, as Ann notes, there is a discourse of "movie love" that finds its antithesis in the discourse of "real love," the recent spate of TV shows like the Bachelor, the Bachelorette, and Joe Millionaire represents a surreal Hegelian synthesis of these two discourses of love in what I would call the discourse of "television love." Love on a small screen. These shows present a dizzying array of cross-signaling ideas about love and intimacy and desire now: Is love expected to emerge from a *contest-model,* the terms of which are "looks" and something called "personality"; or is love the result of a process of *moral vetting* (with the somewhat diffident, somewhat admonishing presence of the parents of the potential love object who alternately make the case for their own fairy-tale

daughter or act as protector against the suspected usurper of affection); finally, are love and lust constituted and confirmed as a *contract* , here love is *interested*, i.e. in the pursuit of financial capital (but then belied when Joe Millionaire is revealed as Joe Everyman). Whatever the model, and they are often mixed, the trajectory of these shows' narratives is always in the direction of an engagement and, hopefully, marriage. And yet, none of the pairs that have emerged out of this crucible of love has endured as a couple. Are *we* in the audience caught up in the Barthesian mythologies being deployed, or are we knowingly deconstructing these myths, or are we, as Barthes writes: "living the myth as a story at once true and unreal?" More specific to the terms of Ann's study: Are we watching the death-throes of the already-unsturdy, extant paradigms of love? Do these death-throes reflect the schizophrenically split consciousness about, among other things, love and desire, freedom and commitment, and the temporary and the permanent, or, the relation of commitment to time? Has marriage foundered on the rocks of an undone genealogical grid? This, I take it, would be Ann's assessment when she writes: "Contemporary marriage inspires culture creation precisely because it is institutionally incomplete." Both in Ann's interviews and in these most recent "reality" shows, we moderns seem to be endlessly revisiting a cultural queasiness about desire and its relation to what anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli terms "democratic genealogies." As Povinelli asks of these new style democratic genealogies, "Does the original marriage contract create binding obligations between the two persons, or must they continually reaffirm their commitment? How does an approach to marriage that necessitates a continual consent as opposed to a "done deal" change the orientation of the I in relation to itself and the other?" And she goes on to ask: "Who should be included and excluded from the ranks of blood, money, property and inheritance, love and affection and sex?" (218 "Notes on Gridlock: Genealogy, Intimacy, Sexuality", *Public Culture* 14(1), 2002). What is the relation between love and sex and marriage?

In *Talk of Love* these questions are answered with the proposing of an analytic paradigm. Ann makes the argument that in order to discover who is included and who excluded in such ranks, the analyst indeed must interrogate ideas about the self and actions in the service of the self. She proposes an "identity model" of culture that is influenced by pragmatism's focus on means rather than ends. She writes: "The fundamental notion is that people develop lines of action based on who they already think they are" (*Talk of Love*, 87). Ann's book is remarkable in its detailing of the variations on a theme of who her interviewees think they are and in its framing of the cultural consequences of the variations and their contingent transpositions. To supplement this analysis, and push its analytic language even further in the pragmatist direction, one might focus on situations of love themselves, catching their provisionality as situations forge and dissolve not only genealogies but identities as well, and, as Ann writes, "people are reorganizing their strategies of action or developing new ones" (*Talk of Love*, 93).

mountain that do not directly affect her climb may be irrelevant. She may misconstrue the larger shape of the mountain, yet well describe her own path.

Culture, she goes on:

also describes (and helps to constitute) the personal capacities and resources the actor will use as she follows her path. Thus her knowledge of the strength of her legs, the energy she brings to the task, even her ability to jump over boulders is integral to her organization of her own line of actions (132-33).

What lessons should we draw from the hiker metaphor? Culture, declares Swidler:

Describes our own organization of action. And multiple cultural meanings remain in suspension as long as we have many kinds of action to organize. The fact that as descriptions of the world, or even of our own experience, such cultural meanings may be contradictory or incomplete does nothing to undermine their plausibility. As long as cultural meanings help people mobilize the internal and external supports they need for action, the culture is "true" (133).

These are the bare bones of an argument that Swidler elaborates throughout the book. Impatient with Weberian emphasis on ideas, Parsonian conceptions of cultural systems, and Geertzian notions of culture as a comprehensive environment, Swidler offers a competing primer on why and how culture matters. More specifically, Swidler asks: How do people use culture? How does culture affect people's action, thoughts, and social relations? And what makes some cultural elements more powerful than others? At the center of her analysis moves her hiker, the person coping with life's complexities by drawing on and combining available cultural materials.

Advancing this view, Swidler makes a number of strong, controversial claims, most notably, that cultural coherence is overrated since culture is "multiplex, ambiguous, and contradictory." (169); that culture is more visible during "unsettled times," and it "proliferates" where action is problematic" (130). Culture works, she asserts, by providing people with "strategies of action," not by supplying ultimate ends or values (81, 82).

Swidler has been working on her analysis for over 20 years. She anticipated it years ago in her widely cited description of culture as a toolkit. She brings to it sustained thought about the proper interpretation of culture. As she said to interviewers at the University of Wisconsin two years ago:

I've tried to formulate some central debates because I believe you can't make progress . . . unless you can say what your theory is and what the alternative is and you can use evidence, just evidence, to differentiate among theories and add to the plausibility of one or the plausibility of another. And sociology of culture is just not there . . . I actually see a great deal of my task as being to bring, even if they have to be somewhat crude . . . so that we can start adjudicating among alternative theories and we can know when we have made progress.

Talk of Love applies her theory of culture to the case of love, or more precisely how middle-class Californians talk about the major loves of their lives. Swidler has pushed interviewing, often a wooden technique, into ethnographic terrain, exploring how people manage the organization of cultural materials. Swidler and her three research assistants asked 88 respondents, mostly female, such probing questions as:

What is love?

Does love require some sort of intense, ecstatic experience?

What do you owe a person you love?

What is a good relationship?

Most of their interviewees, Swidler discovered, moved readily back and forth between two apparently contradictory sets of stories: on the one hand, what she calls a "mythic" romantic account of love and on the other, a "prosaic" realistic story of love as requiring hard work and compromise, not irresistible passion . How is it possible, she asks, that the same level-headed people who are skeptical of Hollywood-like images of love, resort to such "mythic" accounts in explaining some of their own experiences?

It's not, she claims, that people simply mouth inconsistent cultural scripts. The paradox, she concludes, rests on established institutions. People draw on different cultural materials to solve the contradictory existential problems raised by the institution of marriage.

In her sensitive exploration, Swidler deliberately avoids three extremely common interpretations of how love works:

First, Maximizing Actors: love as the rationalization of self-interested strategic interaction.

Second, Cultural Dopes: love as purely expressive behavior. Love as a function of an autonomous culture that somehow tells people what and how they should feel.

Third, Structural Puppets: love – or talk about love — as a direct expression of differentiated social positions, e.g. rich people have different conceptions of love from poor people.

Nor does Swidler retreat into psychological reductionism: she explicitly warns: "In exploring what actually gives cultural meanings the power to shape action, we must look not only at what goes on inside individual psyches but at the larger contexts that govern action" (160).

Instead, Swidler treats her subjects as active, creative agents who refashion culture for their own ends. So doing, she wonderfully advances sociological treatments of love. After my 20 years of teaching about love in undergraduate courses, it is enormously refreshing finally to have a reflective, well-documented account to give my students.

Swidler's accomplishments, however, come at a cost. Most crucial, her analysis minimizes the interpersonal construction and reconstruction of culture. By concentrating on how individual agents contend with existential problems through their use of cultural materials, the analysis underplays what we might call the conversational character of culture. The account minimizes not only culture's frequent embedding in shared language, but also its constant negotiation among persons.

Although occasionally people talk to themselves, talk of love ordinarily connects two people who are working out the terms of their relationship as they speak, and often involves third parties to that relationship: children, parents, siblings, or friends. In fact:, Swidler and her collaborators were not listening to monologues but engaging in conversation about love with their respondents. In many cases, furthermore, they were speaking separately with those respondents' spouses, in full knowledge that spouses were likely later to compare notes.

Indeed, from time to time, Swidler herself recognizes the relational character of the culture she is examining. "All social action," she asserts, "involves awareness of the actions and responses of others" (165). Likewise, when discussing "strategies of action" she observes that these are "inherently social":

Not only do people depend on the wider society for cultural resources that shape their capacities for action; strategies of action make sense only within a social world (83).

But how?

Without examining both ends of the conversation, we miss the reshaping of culture through communication that Swidler herself implies underlies the mutual constitution of culture and individuals.

Consider, for example, the presentation of Nora Nelson, a married occupational therapist. Despite having interviewed both Nora and her husband Donald, Swidler treats Nelson's views of her own marriage as almost entirely a set of individual orientations. Take Nora Nelson's explanation of why she and her husband decided not to have any children. Although Swidler speaks of the decision "she and her husband made," the account she records proceeds entirely from an individual perspective:

I guess I wouldn't have cared whether or not we had children. I never really thought that I wanted to have children. I just didn't think about it, since I never really thought about marriage

that much. We didn't get married until we were 26 and 27, and I guess by that time – maybe if I had been 21 or whatever, I would have cared a little more. I was kind of set, you know, with my job and my life and had independence, and so was he (49).

What was surely a negotiated process becomes a strictly individual decision.

How might we bend Swidler's analysis from creative individual *bricolage* toward creative interpersonal negotiation? We can identify some ways of expanding Swidler's analysis by examining two adjacent areas that Swidler had no obligation to examine in her book. First various forms of courtship short of marriage – e.g. hanging out, hooking up, dating, engagement – demonstrate both the historically shifting models and cultural materials that are available to couples and the flexible, creative interpersonal negotiation of those models' application to any particular relationship. All of these forms of courtship provide flexible templates for creative interaction.

Second, we might ask whether Swidler's findings contest Jessie Bernard's claim that there is no single institution of marriage, but rather *his* and *hers* marriage. On one side we might imagine that what Swidler calls the available institutions vary significantly by social category, including gender. On the other side, we might instead suppose that men and women create and interpret the "same" institution using different cultural lenses. The choice makes a large difference to our explanation of what happens when marriages change or disintegrate.

Going back to Swidler's striking metaphor, we might reasonably claim that love hikers almost never walk alone. Instead, they constantly negotiate the terrain and carry on their reconnaissance in collaboration, negotiation, and contention with each other. Swidler's probing interviews put us on a new sort of journey across culture's mountain.

Paul Lichterman, continued

broad constellation of cultural sociology. Sociologists would not all agree on what constitutes culture, for that matter. As cultural analysis develops further, I think that for the health of our own field and the wider discipline too, we need to keep talking to those skeptical of cultural analysis. This is no criticism of *Talk of Love* as an empirical study or conceptual statement. I am thinking more of the book's disciplinary role. People will be reading *Talk of Love* as a major statement of the subfield, and rightly so. That is why I would have liked if there was a quick introductory chapter discussing why we should *look* for culture, before going on to "finding culture," the subject of the first chapter.

What I learned about culture from Nora Nelson

I want to convey how impressed I was with the book's treatment of an interviewee like Nora Nelson. Nora is a woman who answered Ann's interview questions in disarmingly simple ways. She just did not find that much to say about her marriage: "There's not really anything much on my mind, I'm happy." "To each their own." What was so loveable about her husband?: "I don't know. I guess I never really thought about it that much." Interviewees like Nora Nelson can be frightening: Is the interview a failure? Am I doing something wrong? Ann

made the most of Nelson's commonplace observations, turning them into a window on someone who "uses less culture" than others do. At first I balked at the notion that someone might use less culture than someone else. I clarified for myself that using less culture doesn't make someone "less cultural." The phrase also is simple way to describe people who are interesting partly because they're so unlike what academics may assume people will be like if given the opportunity. For many social scientists, culture is a foundational term designating human personhood, and so the notion of someone who uses "less culture" may sound dicey. But as long as we are distinguishing culture as a level of analysis from culture as the symbolic "stuff" of social life—discourses, stories, rules-of-thumb, traditions—then I think the idea of using less culture is illuminating.

I would not want to extrapolate from the interview to Nora's everyday life. Nora may have defined the interview setting as one that calls for information, not musings, "correct answers," not interpretations. Others interviewees may have defined the interview setting differently. So it might be even better to say that Nora used fewer discourses in an interview about love—to say where someone is using culture more or less. I appreci-

ated that the book discusses this issue of the interview itself as a setting, and that the discussion of everyday practices appears separately from the interview cases. I do think it's extremely interesting to know what someone can say about love in an interview. and that may approximate what an interviewee can say in other protected, interpersonal settings. It also was really interesting to know that anyone at all in the US cultural mainstream would talk about love without using pop psychology!

An identity theory of culture: a development since "Culture in Action"

I read Chapter 4 as further elaborating Ann's strategies of action argument in a very useful way: As people draw on cultural repertoires to develop strategies of action, they are also drawing on culturally available selves. For me anyway, this "culturalizes" the actor more than was explicit in the earlier work. It is an extremely valuable analytic move, which in plain terms goes like this: Someone who is speaking or acting on a new discourse has to *be the kind of person* that "says and does that sort of thing." Otherwise, the discourse is only disorienting in a social setting because others in the setting can't place the actor. Discourses and lines of action always unfold in settings, in which people must be able to recognize one another. Culture makes available the selves that people can recognize. I have found this useful in my own work on religious volunteers and environmental activists. Their discourses—whether deep ecology, radical feminism, civic renewal, or social justice—become meaningful only in the context of (culturally available) identities that a group setting allows. People who refuse the identity have a hard time valorizing the vocabulary, even if they might agree with it "on paper," in the abstract.

Focussing on the actor's cultural self is a way of filling in more of the "architecture" of culture that I have heard Ann discussing the last several years. I'm convinced that conceptualizing this architecture further is one of the big projects for the sociology of culture now, and I take it that Ann intends the last couple chapters of the book in that spirit. And so these chapters ask: Are some kinds of culture "deeper" than others? What of culture that is widely heeded yet not widely compelling? There are basic questions about culture here, some of which I had not thought in so many words until I read Ann's lively discussion of them.

Group contexts as part of culture's architecture

I'm glad that Chapter 8, on "Codes, Contexts, and Institutions," discusses contexts as one of the important "external conditions" on culture. These conditions themselves are cultural, not only social-structural. I would argue that contexts are cultural too. Quite a lot of the chapter's discussion defines contexts in "big," politico-historical terms. I am very interested in contexts in this sense, and also in the group contexts of everyday life (and Ann is too, given the scholarship treated in the book.) I would like to push the point a bit further, in the spirit of advancing one of the agendas in *Talk of Love.*

One way to take up Weber's insight (p. 169) that culture's influence varies by context is to study cultural patterns as they play out in specific group contexts. Of course many studies treat discourses, vocabularies, or codes in particular group contexts but they do not theorize the role of the context. We must do that if we want to arrive at a conceptual statement on how people put culture to use in everyday life. This should be part of culture's "architecture"—the way the analytically different cultural "things"—stories, practices, sayings, ideologies—work together. Groups maintain different *group styles* in different contexts. Those styles are themselves cultural patterns that we can study, and they filter the meanings and uses of discourse in everyday settings. I'm previewing an argument that I make with Nina Eliasoph in a new article in *American Journal of Sociology* (Vol. 108, no. 4) so I won't go into great detail here, but observe that our studies tend to deal with just this of question of culture's architecture.

By attending more to the (cultural) group contexts of culture, sociologists of culture would not only clarify how culture works. We would also give ourselves a big opportunity to build bridges with social psychologists who have long studied some similar aspects of group life with different concepts. To me, this is a bridge-building, not moat-building project, and at best it could expand the way sociologists ask questions about group interaction. Investments in conceptual vocabularies and styles of research make this a very challenging project. But it's a project that might enhance cultural sociology with others' research, demonstrating at the same time that culture does indeed matter and requires sensitive culture concepts. For me, Ann's book makes the case for sensitive culture concepts convincingly, in marvelous conceptual detail, with a compelling set of questions for future work.

Isaac Reed, continued

dancer" (Swidler 2001: 24) enables us to grasp agency and interaction in terms of the meanings put into practice by individuals.

However, our understanding of culture and how it works – our interpretation of evidence like interviews – is invariably informed by the theoretical models and presuppositions with which we operate. These theoretical choices have a relatively autonomous influence on the explanations we construct, separate from the "data." Most compelling explanations - and this is especially the case with a highly interpretive cultural explanation like Swidler's - weave these presuppositions seamlessly into the presentation of empirical evidence and the explanatory

schemas proposed to account for it. This is a necessary step in any good sociological explanation, one which Swidler takes with admirable ease. However, the fact that the construction of an explanation is partially an act of writing does not free the critic from his or her duty to unearth the abstract components of the theory behind the interpretation, to denaturalize the explanation in an effort to propose alternative theoretical schemas and weigh their relative merits. This comment on *Talk of Love: How Culture Matters* is a very short version of such an exercise. In particular, I want to extract the theoretical components of Swidler's culture in action research paradigm to show the limits of her account of culture – to suggest, that is, other ways culture could matter.

Swidler's theory draws from both Weber's response to Marx and the long tradition of Pragmatist-influenced American interactional sociology, particularly that of Blumer (1969). With pragmatism (see also Joas 1996) she rejects the means-ends approach to social action that, in American sociology, is associated primarily with Talcott Parsons' interpretation of Weber. However, Swidler does reach back to Weber's attempt to give "culture" (conceived as the "historical role of ideas" as opposed to Parsons' "global, ahistorical values" (Swidler 1986: 274)) explanatory power. And, she retains the individualist strand of Weberian methodology evident in the opening pages of *Economy and Society* wherein he gives an empathic account of *verstehen* sociology. This kind of approach to subjectivity often fits nicely with a vision of social order as achieved primarily by institutional constraint, and this is the case both with Weber's writings on bureaucracy and organizations (see Alexander 1983) and with Swidler's attempt to account for culture "from the outside in" in the latter part of *Talk of Love*. For at its heart, Swidler's theory is one in which individuals confront external social institutions, situational contexts, and "codes," with a certain amount of "culture" at their disposal. A cultural toolkit is not used instrumentally as means to a specific end, but rather provides schemas and blueprints for the ensuing action-in-situation. Actors mobilize certain frames, depending upon the situation, to motivate action and construct meaningful interpretations.

As a concrete, empirical description, such an account rings quite true to anyone who has ever tried to win a debate, explain themselves, or get through a difficult and problematic situation, and in this way Swidler provides a quite compelling appropriation of micro-sociology along the lines of some of Giddens' (1976, 1979) early work. As the central analytic commitment of a theory of culture, however, it has too much specificity in the sense that thinking about individuals facing situations cannot be the only way to think about culture if we are to catch all of its social effects in our theoretical nets.

The central figure of Swidler's theory is an agent with a subjectivity that is (1) separate from the "real" social world of institutions and contexts and externally defined codes, and (2) connected to, but not really constrained by, the skills that that agent acquires. This is the "knowledgeable agent" of Giddens, and it derives from the overreaction within micro-sociology to the problem of "cultural dopes" in Parsons (Garfinkel 1967, for a further account of the problems with the micro-revolution in sociology, see Alexander 1988). Action, then, is the individual bringing these skills (culture) to bear on the institutions, contexts, and codes that constrain him or her and define his or her life situations. In the last instance she insists that the fact that these skills are shared consistently across individuals is a result of the fact that different individuals have to confront the same institutions that constrain and enable them (Swidler 2001: 133-134).

The theoretical next step would be to show how the individualist view on culture derives from a reliance on a version of the subject-object split that imagines mind as both separate from body (and "reality") and as the property of individuals, an exercise in metatheory whose overuse is only outdone by our continued reliance on the oppositions it deconstructs, and whose ironic effects would be assured by pragmatism's majestic claims to have left all such problems behind (Joas 1993:

18-22). But instead I would like to point directly to the advantages and disadvantages this particular set of theoretical commitments has for empirical research on culture and the construction of interpretive explanations.

Toolkit theory begets certain empirical sensitivities that are quite useful, enabling us to focus on (1) the moves people make to define situations, interactional and personal, (2) the ways in which people respond to the exigencies of life with certain sets of symbols that suggest certain paths or chains of action, and (3) the limits placed on these choices by the finite number of action-orientations to choose from. However, the misplaced concreteness that christens the interactional as the definitive site of culture removes the ability to elucidate in detail the overarching symbolic frames within which such individual "choices" are even possible, and which construct the very situations and institutions to which actors respond. In particular, it becomes difficult to give culture, as a collective structure, either analytic or concrete autonomy, and, furthermore, disables the investigation of coherence that might lie behind some of the contradictions that Swidler finds when people talk about love.

(1) The analytic autonomy of culture. In Swidler's account, the use of the consistent (across different individuals) and coherent (internally) culture of "mythic love" is explained by the constraints of the institution of marriage: "The 'mythic' view of love is grounded, I believe, in a structural reality…despite the prevalence of divorce, marriage still has this structure: one is either married or not (however ambivalent the underlying feelings may be); one cannot be married to more than one person." (Swidler 2001: 117-118). Swidler then traces the two contrasting discourses of love, "mythic" and "prosaic-realist" to the "properties" of marriage (Swidler 2001: 119). As such, the persistence of the obviously false (?) discourse of mythic love is explained by the real social institution of marriage that constrains actors' choices. But, as her own historical account of the love myth (Swidler 2001: 112-114) might suggest, the institution of marriage carries with it certain preconceptions and understandings of romantic relationships between men and women, and any explanation of "marriage" as a social fact must incorporate the causal efficacy of this discourse. However, an individualist view of culture, which takes institutions as the hard facts of real life with which subjectivities must deal, cannot incorporate such an explanation. A stronger cultural explanation would note that marriage already means something to the actors and that their personal experiences of romance are structured as much by this meaning as by its corresponding institutional constraints on their action. Furthermore, this "meaning of marriage" should be investigated as a broad social discourse that *emerges* in individuals' accounts when we interpret them, but is not identifiable as essentially a property of their subjectivities.

(2) The concrete autonomy of culture. If we were to take a more collective, "structural" approach to culture, and view it also as an (internal) environment to action, we would also be more ready to see the role that concrete public culture plays in structuring people's experiences.

That is, not only does the social fact of "marriage" have a cultural element, but the realm of culture proper – movies, television shows, popular music – exerts a tremendous influence on individual experience by projecting the narratives, interactional cues, and sacred status of romance. It is through popular culture that we learn the meaning of love. Swidler's account of public "codes" takes National Secretaries Week as its prime example (Swidler 2001: 163-169), and thereby affirms public culture as entirely external to the actors that confront it, a kind of "soft" version of institutional structures. But it seems to me that the relationship of private subjectivities and public codes is a much more complex and causally entwined one. For one thing, Swidler's derivation of the culture of mythic love from the exigencies of the institution of marriage would not account very well for the romantic behavior of teenagers, college students, adulterers, unwed mothers and many other groups who would, I expect, also talk about mythic love. That is, I would hypothesize that the mythic account of love structures the action of many who are not so intimately confronted by the institution of marriage as her interviewees are. But to see this requires not only a more methodologically diverse sample (something Swidler cannot be faulted for, she has specific reasons for her selection of middle class California couples), but also a theory that can account for the role public culture plays in forming the very subjectivities that (sometimes) reject it. This relationship – between cultural artifacts and individual subjectivity – has of course been the subject of a great deal of social theory, including critical theory (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, Marcuse 1968, Habermas 1989), semiotics (Barthes 1972, Eco 1979) and some cultural sociology (Jacobs 2000, Eyerman 1998, Wagner-Pacifici 2000), but its investigation is fundamentally disabled by the toolkit perspective, which, via a critique of Geertz, rejects both the methodological injunction to reconstruct action as a text and serious consideration of the efficacy and social force of texts themselves.

(3) Discursive formations and contradictory myths. My first two criticisms left intact one of Swidler's central assertions, that the cultural frames people use are "contradictory" (Swidler 2001: 31). This justifies Swidler's rejection of Geertzian approaches to culture and those cultural sociologies that are in some sense aligned with it, since it belies the idea that cultural constellations are coherent (Swidler 2001: 182). But while there is indeed a contradiction between the "mythic" and "prosaic-realist" ways of talking about love, we should hesitate to make the move from contradictory utterances to the incoherence of culture. For, as Levi-Strauss first noticed and Foucault made exceptionally clear in his early work, opposites and contradictions are often part of the same discursive formation. In particular, the discursive formation, or cultural landscape, upon which this opposition is articulated, the historical *a priori* that makes it possible and meaningful, is not explored in *Talk of Love*. Perhaps it is taken for granted, by Swidler and by all of us, that the frames in which we think about romance and love take their places within a matrix of heterosexual normativity (Butler 1990). Even so, it would have been interest-

ing to account for this sociologically, either via an account of institutions and power dynamics or by the constructive constraints of cultural imagery. But it is hard to see how thinking of culture as a toolkit would allow this. To understand discourse, we have to give up on the knowledgeable agent as the founding unit of social theory, and amend the current view of culture-as-practice with accounts of textuality and structure.

It was Anthony Giddens who, in the world of Anglo-American sociology, insisted that we "bring the actor back in." He, like Swidler, took polemical aim in at Talcott Parsons' sociological theory, claiming that "*there is no action in Parsons' action frame of reference*" (Giddens 1976: 16, italics in original). And while Swidler surely has a more cultural theory than does Giddens, her work still does not fully grasp the structures of meaning that exert force on social agents. I think that we are aware, after Parsons, of the risks inherent in conceiving of culture in a more collective, structural way. But we also have tools that he did not have, in particular, the ability to reconstruct action as a text (Ricoeur 1981). While the textual metaphor is incomplete and does indeed demand an account of practice, it should not be jettisoned in the name of a critique of idealism (Swidler 2001: 20-23), so as to enable a return to the sociology of institutions and the way individuals deal with them. Culture has to matter, not only for unsettled lives of individuals confronted with choices, but for theorists of social forces as well. It must be considered an emergent property that exists over the heads and behind the backs of the actors that make it possible. Only when culture is thought of as a structure in the strong sense will it really matter for sociology.

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The Author Responds[*]
Ann Swidler, Univ. of California-Berkeley

Let me first take up what I think is a common theme among the critics here, though each sees it in a different way: *Talk of Love*, despite its efforts to deal with the organization of culture "from the outside-in," nonetheless treats culture too much in relation to individual action, and too little as a truly autonomous level of analysis, and a truly collective, trans-personal phenomenon.

The Durkheimian conundrum–how to locate the way in which culture is truly collective, and not the aggregate of individual sentiments; the way in which collective consciousness is *sui generis*, not simply somehow shared among individuals–is the Foundational Mystery of the sociology of culture. And I agree that *Talk of Love* does not solve it, though I think it makes some progress. But the problem is genuinely difficult; it can't be solved simply by declaring that culture is collective, constitutive, autonomous, and so forth.

My approach was to start with theory that could generate clear, straightforward causal or explanatory claims. This is necessarily sometimes crude, and less elegant than other approaches. And, yes, I started with individual actors–as if they had some essential reality–and then tried to work back to the collectiveness of culture in ways I thought I could defend theoretically and empirically. This approach could allow me really to see how and why culture is collective–or rather, why some kinds of cultural stuff are inherently more collective than other kinds, and how culture is more collective at some times than at other times.

Here are some the missing collective elements to which my (generous and gentle) interlocutors point:

Viviana Zelizer notes that I underplay "the interpersonal construction and reconstruction of culture." Words of love, in particular, often are negotiated in the intimate interactions of couples or with friends and family. Culture then is collective in the sense that it is negotiated in interaction, so that meanings are both more particular and more public than I suggested in *Talk of Love*.

Paul Lichterman[1] urges that we pay more attention to group contexts as crucial cultural arenas. He and Nina Eliasoph have identified "group styles" as powerful aspects of interpersonal contexts that filter and shade what can be said and how, and identify certain kinds of people as recognizable participants.

Isaac Reed notes that *Talk of Love* stresses the contradictions in individuals' thinking about love but fails to "elucidate in detail the overarching symbolic frames within which such individual 'choices' are even possible" or to investigate the "coherence that might lie behind some of the contradictions."

Robin Wagner-Pacifici develops a wider meditation on the discursive frames available in American culture for thinking about love, noting that *Talk of Love* seems to bypass or marginalize sex, lust, and passion. In "the recent spate of TV shows like the Bachelor, the Bachelorette, and Joe Millionaire" she sees a "dizzying array of cross-signaling ideas about love and intimacy and desire now." Highlighting the performative aspects of discursive structures, she asks, "Are we in the audience caught up in the Barthesian mythologies being deployed, or are we knowingly deconstructing these myths, or are we, as Barthes writes: 'living the myth as a story at once true and unreal?'"

Knowing I am doing the individual critiques some violence, I would say that they too fail fully to articulate the micro-macro link: the first two (those of Zelizer and Lichterman) add a valuable "micro" dimension to our cultural analyses, but don't resolve more "macro" concerns such as where the content of the culture in such face-to-face domains is generated, why it is appropriated and sometimes becomes the dominant discourse in some settings, and how it is either sustained or transformed. The latter two (those of Reed and Wagner-Pacifici), on the other hand, describe the collective culture, but don't probe how it is brought to bear; how it gets structured differently in some situations than others; when and why it is brought to bear on action; or when it loses plausibility and falls away. Isaac Reed notes quite rightly that some taken-for-granted cultural elements aren't contested, uncertain, or conflictual (although the near-universal assumptions that marriages are voluntary and that individuals must make decisions about their

lives seem more universally uncontested than does hetero-sexuality, which is already considered in need of defense by its proponents). Robin Wagner-Pacifici provides only a tiny sample of her ability to parse the cultural grammar and syntax of moves in a social drama, but I take her larger point to be that the cultural analyst should start by tracing the thematic acro-batics of public–and publicized–social dramas.

In these critics' comments, real progress in cultural analysis is evident. We are developing increasingly rich un-derstandings of the more immediate interpersonal contexts in which culture is deployed, negotiated, sustained, and even generated. And I also see progress on many fronts in the ability to interpret or describe the meanings (including some-times the structure and, to a lesser extent the dynamics) of cultural texts, from Robin's dazzling interpretive riffs to John Mohr's analyses of the interdependent structuring of discourses and practices.[2] But we still have difficulty articulating how the link between "micro" and "macro" or between individual- and small-group-level uses of culture and the larger structure of discourses actually works.

Let me say where I think *Talk of Love* made progress on these issues and where we might go from here. I sug-gested that, at the individual level as well as at the level of cultures writ large, cultural meanings are multiple, sometimes fragmentary, and often contradictory. While such features of culture can rightly be hailed as "multiplicity," "polysemy," and "transposability,"[3] I argue that they create serious problems for cultural explanation. To link culture and action, one has to look at how people appropriate and use cultural meanings, and how, out of the multiplicity of resources they have available, people fluidly invoke one or another among them.

Talk of Love also suggests ways of analyzing how culture is structured collectively, even when it is fragmentary, hazy, or inconsistent in the experience of individuals (or in inti-mate interactions and small group settings). Codes, Contexts, and Institutions are collective structures or sites that organize meanings. Semiotic Codes are relationally-defined public mean-ings that determine how identity or behavior will be "read" by others; an example might be wearing red or blue in gang terri-tory, where independent of one's feelings or intentions, one's colors signal affiliation. Contexts are settings, like political rallies or corporate board meetings, in which ideas and sym-bols that might normally be confused or loosely associated get tightly aligned when they are part of a party line, a polar-ized political conflict, or an explicit program. Finally, Institu-tions (like marriage) structure cultural meanings by defining the social possibilities that individuals may seek to achieve. A telling example is the way contemporary marriage keeps alive two contradictory understandings of love, one ("prosaic real-ism") that people invoke to keep their relationships going (by emphasizing compromise and communication, or by adopting other faddish remedies indiscriminately without necessarily following any of them) and the other ("mythic love") that people use when they focus on the big questions about commitment and permanence–whether this person is "the one," whether this relationship is "it," and whether, when times are tough, one "really loves" one's partner. Both understandings of love re-main vibrant—even when individuals consciously dismiss

them—as long as persons are seeking relationships consti-tuted on the model of marriage: exclusive, all-or-nothing com-mitment.

Institutions are important structures (themselves crys-tallized meanings) that link micro-arenas and macro-symbolic systems, determining which elements will be keep alive in the broad discursive repertoire, which meanings will be mobilized, and even which contexts (such as the intimate discussions in which a couple invokes "words of love") will define particular, local meanings of general cultural symbols. But institutions are not the only such intermediate structure (unless we en-large the concept of "institution" so broadly as to make it virtu-ally meaningless). Indeed, a crucial challenge facing the soci-ology of culture is to start conceptualizing other elements of the architecture that might mediate between (and sometimes structure) the micro contexts in which meanings are deployed and the wider discursive fields in which generally available sym-bols resonate.

In *Talk of Love* I also suggested that some kinds of culture are fundamentally collective in a way that ordinary ele-ments of an available cultural repertoire need not be. "Collec-tive action schemas," in my formulation, are necessarily shared because they are a rule or code for organizing or coordinating common action—a code that "everyone knows that everyone else knows." A collective-action schema is the default option available when other, more normal ways of organizing social life fail. In the U.S. this shared code is American voluntarism, the rule that says that collective life is created by individuals who freely choose to act together on the basis of shared inter-ests or ideas. Such collective action schemas do not change readily; they are necessarily collective and fairly enduring, be-cause they work as long as one knows that others share them. They change only at major public, ritual turning points, when everyone can see that everyone else has seen that a new model for collective action is available. Such collective schemas are widely publicized, articulated in myths and stories, and often objects of reverence, even though much of social life may actu-ally be organized in ways quite at variance with the dominant ideal.

"Collective action schemas" are one of a number of possible kinds of cultural elements. Attempting to describe this concept and it properties suggests the larger argument that "Culture" is really a number of very different kinds of things,[4] which may be differently organized, have different kinds of rela-tionships to individual action, and be "collective" in very differ-ent senses. The "group styles" that Paul Lichterman and Nina Eliasoph describe are perhaps another of these distinctive "kinds" of cultural elements, as are the mixture of common sense, platitudes, and shared references that mediate ordi-nary conversational life.

Writing *Talk of Love* left me with a sense of the incom-pleteness of what I had done, as well as a sense of exhilara-tion about having opened new lines of inquiry. My hunch is that the next frontier of cultural analysis will require better for-mulations of what "institutions" and "institutionalization" mean,[5] and better methods of studying them as cultural realities. In-stitutions are at the heart of the Durkheimian mystery of how culture can be both a part (indeed the organizer) of individual consciousness and also be a reality *sui generis* that from the

point of view of individuals is external and constraining. John Meyer and his group have thought of "institutional rules" as somehow located "out there," beyond the immediate world persons inhabit, but they don't have a good account of how those rules acquire their reified character. Other theorists think of institutions in overly concrete terms, as organizations along with their purposes and meanings. My own analysis of marriage, as several friends have pointed out,[6] overstates the sense in which the institution of marriage can be treated as a "cause" of Americans' understandings of love, since marriage itself is infused with the aspiration for love. Indeed marriage might be thought of as having the fulfillment of love as its purpose, just as what "real love" means for middle class Americans is structured by the exclusive, all-or-nothing institutional form of marriage. But none of these formulations quite gets at the fact that human collectivities can establish certain forms and rules as realities, reinforced and shaped by symbols. How they do this in a way that allows those created realities to acquire authoritativeness and substance, that makes them autonomous realities that then interact with individuals' concepts, assumptions, and confusions (so that we can reject marriage or long for it or do both at once; we can question our sexuality or embrace it; we can be indifferent to baseball or follow it fanatically) is a question worthy of our most careful, sober theorizing and our most creative, daring methodological efforts.

ENDNOTES

[*] I want to thank all those who contributed to the two panels that discussed *Talk of Love*. Nothing is more rewarding to an author than having her work taken seriously by critics she respects, and I am very grateful. These "critics" indeed were very generous commentators or interlocutors, perhaps dissuaded by friendship from being "critical critics." Jerry Jacobs put together the panel for the Eastern Sociological Society meetings in Philadelphia in Fall 2002; Neil Gross arranged the Author-meets-Critics session at the Pacific

Sociological Association meetings in Long Beach in Spring 2003. And Mark Jacobs demonstrated his usual editorial aplomb in the tact with which he cajoled and encouraged us to bring this conversation into print.

[1] See the full development of this argument in Nina Eliasoph and Paul Lichterman, "Culture in Interaction," *American Journal of Sociology* 108, No. 4 (January 2003):735-794.

[2] See Robin Wagner-Pacifici, *Theorizing the Standoff: Contingency in Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and John Mohr and Vincent Duquenne, "The Duality of Culture and Practice: Poverty Relief in New York City, 1888-1917," *Theory and Society* 26 (April-June 1997):305-356.

[3] I borrow these terms from William H. Sewell, Jr., "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation." *American Journal of Sociology* 98 (July 1992):1-29, in full recognition that he is referring to "structures," and the schemas and resources that constitute them, and not to the overworked and underspecified term "culture."

[4] See Ronald L. Jepperson and Ann Swidler, "What Properties of Culture Should We Measure?," *Poetics* 22 (1994):359-371.

[5] See Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell, "Introduction," pp. 1-38 and Ronald L. Jepperson, "Institutions, Institutional Effects, and Institutionalism," pp. 143-163, both in Powell and DiMaggio (eds.), *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

[6] Roger Friedland and Mitchell Stevens, in conversations following the 2003 Cultural Turn Conference at Santa Barbara, insisted that institutions themselves are already infused with cultural meanings. To marry or to want to marry is already to want love and its fulfillment in marriage. But how some kinds of culture become constitutive–actually create binding arrangements that come to have their own reality and their own enforceable obligations–is still not well worked out.

2003 Culture Section Awards

Best Book Award: Amy Binder

The Culture Section Best Book Prize Committee reviewed 44 books, published 2001-2003, that were nominated for the 2003 award. The burden of numbers was relieved by the quality of the books. In addition to their scholarly excellence, we note with joy that sociologists of culture defy disciplinary norms by writing with both clarity and grace. The choice of just one book was exceedingly difficult. The criteria the committee used to narrow the field were theoretical sophistication, empirical grounding, and broad general interest. While these criteria still left many candidates, the committee settled upon Amy Binder's *Contentious Curricula* (Princeton University Press) as the winner.

In nominating this book, Mitchell Stevens wrote that it "deftly integrates insights from...social movements, organizations, and culture to create a compelling explanation for why some curricular reform movements succeed and others do not. In the process, Binder builds bridges among subfields that are cru-

cial to a robust cultural sociology." The committee concurred. Binder uses seven instances of two very different educational reforms — Afrocentrism and creationism — to show how a comparative analysis of local social movements, viewed from cultural, political and organizational angles, can advance our ability to explain social movements in general. Theoreticians will appreciate the book for its precision in demonstrating the general in the particular. Methodologists will find in it an illustration of how to grapple successfully with the small N- many variable problem. And general readers, especially those outside sociology, will find that its wry view of contentious politics offers a human comedy in which proponents of exotic solutions to perceived problems get mangled by social/organizational/cultural forces, forces which we (thanks to Amy Binder) can now claim to understand. *Contentious Curricula* is both general sociology and cultural sociology at their very best.

Committee Members: Wendy Griswold (chair), Jon Cruz, Mark Schneider

Best Article Award: John Foran and John-Pierre Reed

When considering the twenty-two articles nominated for this year's award, we – the committee members – employed a number of criteria. For example, we examined each article in terms of theoretical and analytical strength, creativity, innovativeness, quality of writing, and its relevance both to the Sociology of Culture and the discipline as a whole. We were pleased to find that many of the articles easily met our rigorous criteria. While this bodes well for the Sociology of Culture and the discipline, it made our selection task all the more difficult. Nevertheless, we did agree that two articles were especially deserving of this year's award – one as the recipient and one as an honorable mention. Rather than describing these articles, I instead offer their respective abstracts – as the authors' words eloquently show the ambitiousness and relevance of their respective pieces.

I begin with the recipient of this year's award. Its abstract reads as follows:

Using interview data from Nicaragua, we propose the concept of "political cultures of opposition" for bringing culture and agency into the study of revolutions, and linking the subjective elements of experience and emotion with the social structural ones of organizations and networks. We use evidence from the Nicaraguan uprising of the 1970s to show how a repressive political structure was experienced by ordinary citizens, who turned to two political cultures – liberation theology and Sandinismo. These cultural constructions enabled participants from diverse backgrounds to channel their experiences and emotions into revolutionary actions, most often with and alongside the Sandinistas.

The article is found in Volume 28 (pages 335-370) of *Critical Sociology* (2002) and entitled "Political Cultures of Opposition: Exploring Idioms, Ideologies, and Revolutionary Agency in the Case of Nicaragua." We are pleased to present its authors – John Foran and Jean-Pierre Reed – with the Sociology of Culture Section's "Best Article" Award.

I now turn to this year's "honorable mention." Its abstract reads as follows:

Recent work on neighborhood effects has rekindled interest in social organization theory and its relationship to local social capital. This article addresses several gaps in our knowledge about the mechanisms linking structural conditions to social (dis)organization and the role of culture in this process. Relying on the case of a predominantly Puerto Rican housing project in Boston, it investigates changes in one aspect of social organization – participation in local community activities – suggesting the theory should incorporate the role of cohorts and cultural frames and rethink the relationship among structure, culture, and change.

The article is found in Volume 108 (pages 1-54) of *American Journal of Sociology* (2002) and entitled "Culture, Cohorts, and Social Organization Theory: Understanding Local Participation in a Latino Housing Project." We are pleased to present its author – Mario Luis Small – with an Honorable Mention for the Sociology of Culture Section's "Best Article" Award.

Committee Members: Timothy J. Dowd (chair), Anne Kane, Vincent Roscigno

Best Student Paper Award: Karen Danna Lynch

Karen Danna Lynch is the winner of the Culture Section's 2003 Best Student Paper Award. Her paper "The Good Mother: Ideologies of Motherhood 1950-1998" was selected from a pool of 22 impressive submissions.

Danna Lynch examines images of mothers in advertisements appearing in two popular magazines—*Life* and *Redbook*—from 1950-1998. Her fascinating analysis focuses on changes in several aspects of advertisements that depict mothers: What products are advertised with images of mothers (home appliances, cleaning products, medicines, infant products)? What is the mother most likely to be holding (the product, her child)? Where is the mother located (living room, kitchen, child's bedside)? And who appears with mothers (husbands, children, infants)? Danna Lynch finds that ideas of motherhood, as expressed in magazine advertisements, have changed from a role defined by responsibility to household and husband (images of mothers vacuuming and ironing) to a role defined by the provision of intimate care to her children (images of mothers bathing an infant or medicating and comforting a sick child). Karen Danna Lynch is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology at Rutgers University.

Committee Members: Noah Mark (chair), Laura Grindstaff, Andrew Perrin

Books of Note
Richard A. Peterson, Vanderbilt University

Alexander, Jeffrey C. The Meanings of Social Life: A Cultural Sociology. New York: Oxford University Press. Human action depends on rational choice, so, argues Alexander, we should not focus on the choices so much as on the rationalizations people habitually use for making their choices. These rational-izations or frames, he calls rhetorics that both restrain and enable action. Exposing the everyday myths and narratives in a series of studies ranging from the Holocaust to Watergate, he shows how these unseen but potent cultural structures translate into concrete actions and institutions.

Saguy, Abigail C. <u>What Is Sexual Harassment? From Capitol Hill to the Sorbonne</u>. Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press. Based on parallel data sources including detailed interviews and media stories in France and the US, Saguay shows how differently sexual harassment is framed by women and men, activists and officials in the two countries.

Medrano, Juan Diez. <u>Framing Europe: Attitudes to European Integration in Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom</u>. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press. By applying frame analysis to in-depth interviews, newspaper articles, novels, history texts, political speeches and survey data, Medrano shows how the loss of Empire affected Germany, Spain and the UK conditioning the first two and not the latter for the consolidation of the European Union.

Mabel Berezin and Martin Schain. editors. <u>Europe without Borders: Remapping Territory, Citizenship, and Identity in a Transnational Age</u>. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. Contributors examine the intersection of identity and territory in the new Europe created by the European Union in 1992. They address such topics as how Europeans now identify themselves as citizens of a particular country or as members of a larger sociopolitical entity in the era of globalization, devolution, and mass migration.

Jones, Paul. <u>Raymond William's Sociology of Culture: A Critical Reconstruction</u>. New York: Palgrave. Jones focuses on Raymond Williams' later essays on culture that set out his radical democratic vision and critique research traditions ranging from Birmingham cultural studies to orthodox conservative American sociology. Comparisons are drawn between his initiatives and those of Habermas and Bourdieu.

Pitts, Victoria. <u>In the Flesh: The Cultural Politics of Body Modification</u>. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. The 1990s saw the dramatic rise of spectacular forms of body modification from tattooing and body piercing to flesh hanging and subdermal implants. Through interviews and observation Pitts explores the subcultures that normalize these practices. Where is the parallel study of the world of body modification called "cosmetic surgery"?

Denzin, Norman K. and Yvonna S. Lincoln, editors. <u>9/11 in American Culture</u>. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press. The editors anthologize 52 diverse brief pieces of personal reaction to 9/11 and its corollaries. Missing are the voices of the millions that rejoiced that day and of those who made the event the centerpiece of moving the country toward their goal of a one-party state.

Schwarz, Maureen Trudelle. <u>Blood and Voice: Navajo Women Ceremonial Practitioners</u>. Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press. Traditionally men are the keepers of Navajo tradition, but women are increasingly filling that role. Drawing on 22 interviews with female practitioners of the singer story-teller role, Schwartz shows how these women negotiate the ambiguities in their position.

Djao, Wei. <u>Being Chinese: Voices from the Diaspora</u>. Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press. Chinese communities are found throughout the world. Djao shows how 22 of their number negotiate their sense of Chinese identity while also being closely bound into their adopted countries.

Young, Alfred A. Jr. <u>The Minds of Marginalized Black Men: Making Sense of Mobility, Opportunity, and Future Life Chances</u>. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press. Young finds that Black men stuck in ghettoized neighborhoods are more likely to believe in the American dream than are their more mobile compatriots.

Charrad, Mounira M. <u>States and Women's Rights: The Making of Postcolonial Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco</u>. Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press. Focusing on three one-time French colonies Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco, Charrad shows women's fates have been shaped by the mediation of kin-based formations and political power leading to the expansion of women's rights in Tunisia but not in Morocco or Algeria.

Weitz, Rose. <u>Rapunzel's Daughters: What Women's Hair Tells Us About Women's Lives</u>. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Using engaging stories from a wide range of respondents, Weitz shows how tightly hair is bound into notions of gender and self-worth of Americans women of all ages, classes, sexual identities, and ethnicities.

Hoffman, Lily M., Susan S. Fainstein, and Dennis R. Judd, editors. <u>Cities and Visitors: Regulating People, Markets, and City Space</u>. The authors show how government regulation has helped to shape the development of ten cities ranging from Barcelona to Mexico City, from Venice to the Australian Gold Coast as tourist havens.

Gugler, Josef. <u>African Film</u>. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Through the analysis of 15 African films, Gugler shows how their creators have tried to re-image Africa in the contemporary context, comparing these films with a Hollywood film and an Apartheid-era South African film set in Africa. He shows how the technical and financial difficulties of making the films influenced their content.

Galenson, David W. <u>Painting Outside the Lines: Patterns of Creativity in Modern Art</u>. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Carefully studying the careers of one hundred successful painters from the time of the French Impressionists on, Galenson finds that two patterns emerge. These he calls conceptualists and experimentalists. The work of the former matures early while work of the latter matures late in life.

Bennett, Andy and Richard A. Peterson, editors. <u>Music Scenes: Local, Translocal, and Virtual</u>. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press. Music scenes are largely inconspicuous sites where clusters of musicians, producers, and fans express their distinctive music and lifestyle choices. Following a definitional introduction, fourteen original articles explore specific local scenes (jazz, Chicago blues, rave, karaoke, teen pop, and London salsa), translocal scenes (Riot Grrls, skate punks, Goths,

classical music, womyn's music, and anarcho-punk), and internet-based virtual scenes (alternative country, Canterbury sound, post-rock and Kate Bush fans).

Merton, Robert K. and Elinor G. Barber. The Travels and Adventures of Serendipity: A Study in Sociological Semantics and the Sociology of Science. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press. Merton at his post-World War Two best, tracing the vagaries of the concept "serendipity" in historical, literary and ethnographic sources. He and Barber find the term used to describe the actions of many sorts of people ranging from Australian ranchers and nudist colonists to the folks whose duty it is to "manage serendipity" for the US Navy. In a pure defense of modernism, Barber and Merton show that sociological knowledge is not built by acts of lone "genius." They show that discovery in science is a chaotic blend of wide-ranging curiosity, hard work, and social interaction recognizing anomalies in established theory expecting to find the unexpected. This is "serendipity."

Five from Sage

Hesmondhaigh, David. The Cultural Industries. Hesmondhaigh provides a wide ranging review and evaluation of the debates over cultural production. Firmly grounded in the tradition of critical analysis, it is very useful in its summaries of diverse perspectives.

Doyle, Gillian. Media Ownership: The Economics and Politics of Convergence and Concentration in the UK and European Media. Doyle compares media policy and concentration in the UK and Europe, and she examines the effects of these policies.

Gane, Mike. French Social Theory. Gale identifies three periods of Fench social theory: Positivist (St.Simon, Comte) 1800-80, Anthropological (Durkheim, Mauss) 1880-1940, and Marxist (Kristeva, Bourdieu, Baudrillard) 1940-2000. Each corresponds to a diferent set of problems seen in French society.

Harbord, Janet. Film Cultures. Harbord argues that our tastes in film connect us to social, spatial and temporal networks of exchange and meaning. She deals with film festivals, the discontents of digitalization, and marketing films to audiences.

Du Gay, Paul and Michael Pryke, editors. Cultural Economy: Cultural Analysis and Commercial Life. The authors are, to quote the publisher's blurb: "involved not only in thinking 'culture' into the economy but thinking culture and economy together."

Four from Blackwell

Alexander, Victoria D. Sociology of the Arts: Exploring Fine and Popular Forms. Unlike many who make the claim, this book is both accessible to undergraduates and innovative for research scholars. The theoretical scheme is fleshed out with brief illustrative studies that exemplify the points being made.

Braziel, Jana Evans and Anita Mannur, editors. Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader. Classic statements of the field are included as well as a number of diasporic formations including the Chinese, Africans, Jews, South Asians, Latin American, and Caribbean.

Laming, Donald. Understanding Human Motivation: What Makes People Tick? Laming discusses fear, sex, boredom, rage and money. He also covers underlying issues such as free will, consciousness, and society's role in shaping motivations.

Lehman, Peter and William Luhr. Thinking About Movies: Watching, Questioning, Enjoying. Intended for the beginner, this book inculcates techniques for understanding film in its narrativity and cultural form.

Six from Polity

Bauman, Zygmunt. Liquid Love: On the Family of Human Bonds. Looking at contemporary society, Bauman does not see strength in the weak bonds of affiliation or freedom in open choices. He sees none of the fixed or durable bonds that allow the effort of self-definition and self-assertion giving comfort to those who argue for neo-tribalism and fundamentalism of all types.

Waquant, Loïc. Deadly Symbiosis: Race and the Rise of Neoliberal Penalty. This is not your father's view that conformity requires the creation of deviants. Waquant sees the contemporary penal system as a major engine of social stratification and urban change in the US, Europe and Latin America. He sees this change as rooted in the culture of this "neoliberal" age.

Harrington, Austin. Art and Social Theory. Harrington does an impressive job of grounding the sociology of art in the social theory of the past four decades. Chapters discuss arts institutions, socio-economic structures, aesthetic value, cultural policy, taste and social class, patronage, and the modernism-postmodernism debates.

Beck, Ulrich and Johannes Willms. Conversations with Ulrich Beck. Beck has developed the idea of the "risk society" and has contributed to conceptualizing globalization. Here Willms presents the main points by interrogating Beck himself.

Cashmore, Ellis. Beckham. David Beckham is a world-class footballer but just one among a number. Cashmore examines why and how this athlete has become a celebrity in the UK and beyond. In the process he reveals much about the process of celebrity formation.

Hobson, Dorothy. Soap Opera. Hobson traces the development of the genre from its origins on US radio in the 1930s to its contemporary global spread via TV.

Berg's Five

Barnard, Alan, editor. Hunter-Gatherers in History, Archaeology and Anthropology. Much more so than sociologists, anthropologists have turned a critical eye on the ideological roots of their own activity. Barnard anthologizes excerpts from many of the classical statements on "our contemporary primitive ancestors" and analyzes what the changing view of hunter-gatherers can tell about the American, Russian and Japanese societies in which they have been created.

Silk, Michael and David L. Andrews, editors. Sport and Corporate Nationalisms. The world of sport is suffused with the signs and images of transnational corporations and these have a profound effect on national, local, and global cultural identities. The authors' illustrations are drawn from a number of diverse sites ranging from women's soccer in the US to baseball in Japan and from the FA Cup to the NBA.

Wilson, Thomas M, editor. Drinking Cultures: Alcohol and Identity. Drawing on original field work, the authors show the wide range of differing functions that alcohol plays in religious, family, social and political institutions in countries ranging from Ireland to Hong Kong, Mexico to Germany.

Lien, Marianne E., editor. The Politics of Food. Foot-in-mouth disease, BSE, avian flu, genetic modification, toxic food. The authors explore debates over the toxicity and safety of food.

Freeman, June. The Making of the Modern Kitchen: A Cultural History. Deeply symbolic as well as the site of labor, the English today spend more money refurbishing their kitchens than any other room of the house. Freeman shows the dominant role that womrn play in shaping the appearance of the kitchen.

Six by Stanford University Press

Hooker, John. Working Across Cultures. This is a handbook for omnivores. Hooker shows how to thrive in unfamiliar cultures by pointing to the stress management mechanisms of people who live there. He begins by refuting the notion that professional life interacts with culture only at the level of etiquette. Distinguishing between rule-based and relationship-based cultures, he shows the salience of authority, individualism, competition, security, life style, and humor as well as the concepts of time, space, information and wealth in shaping what is acceptable behavior in a given society.

Earley, P. Chrsitopher and Soon Ang. Cultural Intelligence: Individual Interactions Across Cultures. And another! Put in more business school psychology terms.

Thornton, Patricia. Markets from Culture: Institutional Logics and Organizational Decisions in Higher Education Publishing. Thornton uses the educational publishing industry to understand the relationships between organizational form and culture.

Luhmann, Niklas. Theories of Distinction: Redescribing the Descriptions of Modernity. These essays develop Luhmann's theory of differentiation in modern society.

Turner, Jonathan H. Face to Face: Toward a Sociological Theory of Interpersonal Behavior. Integrating recent research from evolutionary and neuro-physiological theory, Turner proposes a general theory of what happens when people interact.

English-Lueck, J.A. Cultures @ Silicon Valley. English-Lueck, an anthropologist, explores the unique set of assumptions made by engineers and entrepreneurs that suggests how and why apparent success gave way to tangible failure.

Five from Open University Press

Smith, Mark J. Culture: Reinventing the Social Sciences. Smith explores how shifts in the meaning of "culture" have linked with key shifts in the way we research society.

Blackman, Shane J. Chilling Out: The Cultural Politics of Substance Consumption, Youth and Drug Policy. Blackman critically examines the assumptions underlying drug-use prevention and explores the contradictions of drug-use prevention policies. This is set off against the political economy of drugs and drug use as depicted in the media and popular music.

Critcher, Chas. Moral Panics and the Media. Critcher evaluates the usefulness of moral-panic models in understanding how politicians and public interest groups capitalize on apparently new threats and the role of the media in the process. The increasing focus on harm to children is seen in cross-national comparisons.

Carter Cynthia and C. Kay Weaver. Violence and the Media. The authors argue that violence on the media normalizes and legitimizes the acts being displayed.

Dicks, Bella. Culture on Display: The Production of Contemporary Visitability. Bella shows how distinctive aspects of symbolic culture are accentuated and commodified to attract tourists to particular sites.

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http://www.ibiblio.org/culture/.

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Special thanks go to Andy Perrin (*andrew_perrin@unc.edu),* the section's webmaster. Please send Andy your comments and suggestions!

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