Pragmatic Sociology as Cultural Sociology
Beyond Repertoire Theory?

Ilana Friedrich Silber
BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY, ISRAEL

Abstract
Pragmatic sociology is often read as a reaction to and an alternative to Bourdieu’s ‘critical sociology’. This article, in contrast, offers an assessment of pragmatic sociology in terms of its contribution to the theory of culture in general and its affinities with repertoire theory in particular. Whereas the tendency has been to conceive of repertoires as largely unstructured entities, pragmatic sociology has demonstrated a systematic interest in their internal contents and structure, which it has even expanded through its more recent turn to historical and macro comparative analysis. In the process, however, pragmatic sociology has also been leaning towards a form of cultural sociology that actually challenges some major aspects of repertoire theory – thus also bringing into relief the dilemmas facing any attempt at further elaboration of what is now a growing strand of cultural theory.

Key words
- comparative sociology
- cultural sociology
- pragmatic sociology
- theory of culture

Primarily associated with the work of Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot over the past decade, the new French pragmatic sociology is often read as a reaction to and an alternative to Bourdieu’s ‘critical sociology’. True enough, Bourdieu’s importance in the field of sociology in general and French sociology in particular can hardly be overestimated. And it is indeed instructive to understand pragmatic sociology, at least in part, in contradistinction to Bourdieu’s specific brand of critical sociology. Yet there may be other, no less instructive ways of assessing the new school, which may well lead to a very different type of assessment.

My intent though is not to defend the pragmatic approach as being in fact more critical than hitherto acknowledged, although this could be and, to some extent, has already been done. Nor do I wish to explore any further all possible points of mutual convergences (rather than only divergences) between pragmatic
sociology and Bourdieu's or other varieties of critical sociology (see especially Bénatouïl, 1999a; 1999b).

The aim in this article, instead, will be to assess pragmatic sociology as a contribution to cultural sociology in general, and to the theory of culture in particular. One advantage in deploying this alternative perspective is that it draws attention to strengths and weaknesses of the pragmatic approach that readings heavily focused on criteria of 'critical' performance have tended to leave beyond the pale of discussion. More specifically, I shall position pragmatic sociology vis-à-vis a now fast expanding body of research on 'cultural repertoires', with which it displays some major points of theoretical affinity (Lamont, 1992; 1995; 1999; 2000; McLean, 2001; Morawska, 2001; Silber, 2001; Steinberg, 1995; 1998; 1999; Swidler, 1986; 2001a; 2001b; Tilly, 1979; Traugott, 1995).

I shall first assess pragmatic sociology in what by now may be called its 'earlier' phase, i.e. as it was first developed in both separate and collaborative publications by Boltanski and Thévenot from the mid-1980s and reached expression, more particularly, in their major co-authored publication, De la justification (1991). This will be followed by a discussion of more recent developments associated with pragmatic sociology, focusing on two important works in particular: Boltanski's publication with Eve Chiapello, Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme (LNEC) (1999), and Laurent Thévenot's collaborative work with Michèle Lamont on a collection of studies, Rethinking Comparative Cultural Sociology: Repertoires of Evaluation in France and the United States (RCCS) (2000).

While it is only in the latter publication that the notion of repertoire is actually made explicit - perhaps a by-product of collaborative work with Lamont who has made steady use of that notion in her own work since the early 1990s - theoretical affinities with repertoire theory may be shown to be already present in pragmatic sociology from early on. Yet there are also significant differences which I shall try to spell out as a way of also tracing some of the tensions and dilemmas facing any further elaboration of repertoire theory.

Pragmatic Sociology as Cultural Sociology, Phase One

A Micro-Sociology with a Macro-Cultural Thrust

A distinctive thrust of pragmatic research is its attention to the endemic lack of enduring agreement that induces agents to feel the need to justify themselves and criticize others while engaged in the ordinary stream of shifting sequences of action or in intensified situations of dispute and conflict. Given the importance granted to actors' perceptions, actions and interactions in such a framework, French pragmatic sociology may well seem akin to the rich spate of micro-sociologies that had largely developed in the context of American sociology since the mid-1950s in contradistinction to macro-sociology in general and to Parsonian structural-functionalism in particular. The affinities with Garfinkel's ethnomethodology, specifically, have been often underscored and are remarkable indeed. Yet a brief comparison with ethnomethodology may also be the best way
of bringing into relief pragmatic sociology’s distinctive character as a micro-sociology with an unusual macro-cultural thrust.

Like ethnomethodology, pragmatic sociology is primarily concerned with investigating the methods, and more precisely, the practical reasoning and reflexive ‘accounts’ that people use on a daily basis and that make social life an ongoing, practical accomplishment. But there are also crucial differences. Ethnomethodology sees itself committed to the study of the whole range of multifarious methods, or ‘common-sense knowledge, procedures and considerations by means of which the ordinary members of society make sense of, find their way about in, and act on the circumstances in which they find themselves’ (Heritage, 1984: 4). By contrast, pragmatic sociology quickly focused its attention on one, very specific category of ‘practical reasoning’, namely, the range of arguments and principles of evaluation which individuals deploy in the process of trying to define what may be the most proper or legitimate action or standard of action, and whereby they grope for or re-establish social agreement. Intrinsic to such ‘regimes of justification’ – the term introduced by Boltanski and Thévenot – is the tendency to articulate principles of a broad, generalizing nature, of the kind apt to carry across and beyond shifting concrete situations and contexts. Pragmatic sociology thus sharply departs from ethnomethodology’s treatment of the ‘objective reality of social facts’ as an essentially local, detailed, contingent and situation-specific achievement (Garfinkel, 1991: 11) and insists, by contrast, on the systematic exploration of principles of evaluation or ‘regimes of justification’ that are indeed mobilized within, but also transcend specific situational contexts.

Consequently, pragmatic sociology displayed from the very beginning a principled openness to macro-sociological, and even more precisely, macro-cultural analysis, which was deeply enmeshed in the exploration of what otherwise are commonly seen as micro-sociological aspects of everyday action and interaction. In this respect, it would be useful to situate Boltanski and Thévenot (in much greater detail than may be done here) not only vis-à-vis Bourdieu or American-based micro-sociologies, but also, and perhaps rather, in the lineage of a number of important figures in the field and history of French sociology such as Raymond Aron, Raymond Boudon, Lucien Goldmann or Georges Gurvitch. Be it in a more Weberian, neo-Marxist or phenomenological vein, these may well be understood as having paved the way to what is one of the most distinctive (and to my mind most welcome) features of pragmatic sociology, namely, its combined sensitivity to both the ongoing involvement of individuals with processes of meaning-making and agency, as well as the macro-cultural frameworks that structure – in Anthony Giddens’s sense of both enabling and constraining (Giddens, 1984) – such processes.

Yet what now needs to be highlighted is pragmatic sociology’s precise understanding of the relation between agency and macro-cultural frameworks, and of these macro-cultural frameworks themselves, since it is precisely on these issues that we shall find some important points of convergence with the current wave of research on cultural repertoires.

Individual actors, in the pragmatic perspective, are clearly endowed with an
essential competence for evaluation and criticism, as well as a flexible capacity to
switch codes from one situation to another. Switching codes, however, is not an
easy, but a delicate and costly task that requires, precisely, such flexible and
competent agency. Justification itself, in fact, is never to be taken for granted, nor
achieved once and for all; on the contrary, it is repeatedly reconfirmed or alter-
nately weakened by confrontation with ‘tests’ as deemed adequate to each respec-
tive regime of justification, and with other regimes of justification. Underpinning
this constant need for test and confrontation is the lack of steady agreement and
need for justification that is endemic to all social interaction and becomes only
the more salient in situations of conflict – to which pragmatic research devotes
systematic attention. Not all situations of conflict, however, answer to regimes of
justification (or more broadly put, to the mode of ‘justesse’ (Boltanski, 1990:
110–11), and some may well tip over into any of the main alternative modes or
‘regimes of action’ that have been hitherto identified from this theoretical
perspective, such as ‘violence’, ‘agapé’ (all-out love and solidarity), or ‘famili-
arity’.

What emerges thus is an essentially pluralist perception of the fabric of social
interaction as ever rife with potential or actual disagreement and conflict while
also generating pervasive effort, a constant ‘labor’ (Boltanski, 1990: 70), groping
for agreement and coordination. It is also a program of research that does not
relate, as correctly stressed by its critics, to more conventional social groupings
and collectivistic bases of inequality. Hence, one obvious weakness of pragmatic
sociology, on such collectivistic ‘critical-theoretical’ grounds, is that it fails to
examine – even if it never denies – the unequal, socially structured access of indi-
viduals to diverse regimes of justification (Bénatouil, 1999b).

For our present purposes, however, the more important feature of the prag-
matic approach is that conflictual situations and efforts at agreement tend to be
channeled into and shaped by the agents’ access to only a small, not unlimited
number of alternative regimes of action and justification coexisting in a state of
instability. In other words, far from being completely free and flexible, individuals
can only choose from the ultimately limited pool of regimes of criticism and
justification that happen to have been made available to them, historically, as part
of what may best be called – even if Boltanski and Thévenot never use the specific
term at this stage – their ‘cultural repertoire’.

It is precisely this aspect of pragmatic sociology, its distinctive strengths and
weaknesses as a variant of repertoire theory already in its early stages, that I wish
now to address in some further detail.

A Variant of Repertoire Theory?

In quite a few respects indeed, French pragmatic sociology converges with recent
efforts in the context of what is now sometimes identified as a distinctively
American cultural sociology, to give weight to the wider cultural repertoire which
social actors draw upon while engaged in meaning-making ‘on the ground’, as
Ann Spillman puts it, i.e. in the context of interactive processes (Spillman, 2002:
7). Not all such efforts are explicitly framed by the idea of repertoire,\(^\text{10}\) and Spillman herself, in this assessment, applies that term only in a loose and undefined manner. Yet both its increasing currency in precisely such a largely undefined sense and its more explicit deployment by a number of more systematic promoters (see especially, Lamont, 1992; 1995; 1999; 2000; McLean, 2001; Morawska, 2001; Steinberg, 1995; 1998; 1999; Swidler, 1986; 2001a; 2001b; Tilly, 1979; Traugott, 1995), clearly indicate that the idea of repertoire is now catching ground and even competing successfully with earlier key metaphors of cultural analysis (such as cultural systems, cultural codes, or culture-as-text).

Most important in explaining this increasing appeal, perhaps, is its usefulness in conveying the image of a structure that is both enabling and constraining, limiting but also flexible, and relatively stable yet never utterly static or closed. As such, it is also very much in line with the processual and dialectical thrust of current approaches to the notion of structure (Giddens, 1984; Sewell, 1992).\(^\text{11}\) Closely related, it has also proven deeply attuned to the concern with culture-in-action – sometimes also loosely designated as the turn to practice – that has been a central feature of sociological (and anthropological) theory since the 1980s (see e.g. Ortner, 1984). The idea of repertoire in this connection has the double advantage of connoting the ready enactment and concrete performance of practical or practicable options; and of allowing for a measure of individual meaning and agency in mobilizing and choosing a specific configuration of cultural resources, while also stressing the public, and publicly available nature of those resources.\(^\text{12}\) One of the earliest and perhaps still most systematic formulation of repertoire theory, in this regard, is Ann Swidler’s seminal argument on culture as ‘tool-kit’, stressing culture’s causal significance not in defining the ends of action but rather in providing the components or tools used to construct recurrent strategies of action (Swidler, 1986).\(^\text{13}\)

Extant variants of repertoire theory, however, do not form a fully unified front. To begin with, they do not present the same dosage or combination of the central tenets just outlined above; in fact, they even differ in the extent to which they take a fully explicit stance in all these matters. Substantial differences may also be noted with regard to other important theoretical issues, such as the relation between cultural repertoires and other social structures, the incorporation of economist or utilitarian concepts (such as cultural ‘resources’, ‘supply’, ‘tools’), or the exclusive focus on discourse versus inclusion of non-discursive practices.\(^\text{14}\)

Most significant for present purposes, studies of cultural repertoires also differ in their approach to the internal structure of cultural repertoires, in the extent to which they promote a leveling, undifferentiating approach to repertoires’ ideational or symbolic contents or try to establish, on the contrary, some basic principles of internal organization (e.g. a form of hierarchy, an internal ‘logic’, and/or internal contradictions).

Briefly, Ann Swidler’s (1986) argument entailed a largely unstructured approach which proposed no internal distinctions or any principle of internal organization that may have guided us, or the actors, in putting some order within their respective ‘cultural tool-kits’. More structuring approaches, however, can be
seen in Michèle Lamont’s extensive comparative research on symbolic boundaries and national cultural repertoires (Lamont, 1992; 1995; 1999; 2000) and Mark Steinberg’s dialogical analysis of discursive repertoires among 19th-century English cotton spinners (Steinberg, 1995; 1998; 1999). Significantly, Swidler herself has recently corrected for the lack of structure in her initial conception, a failing that she also identifies (to my mind rightly) as a problematic feature of theories of practice in general (Swidler, 2001a).15

By and large, however, research on cultural repertoires has given rather marginal attention, empirically and theoretically, to the issue of their internal structure. One reason for that is probably the obvious, perhaps unavoidable theoretical tension between emphasizing plurality and flexibility in the conceptualization of cultural repertoires on the one hand, and trying to endow these very same loose, flexible entities with some form or principle of internal structure on the other. It is thus only the more significant that pragmatic sociology, otherwise attuned to repertoire theory in so many ways, happens to display a distinctive and systematic concern with the internal ideational contents and internal structure of cultural repertoires.

The Internal Structure of Cultural Repertoires

To begin with, pragmatic sociology devotes serious systematic attention to cultural contents, to the actual pool of specific ideas and ideals extant in cultural repertoires. This is most evident in its detailed analysis and comparison of the criteria of equivalence, definitions of the public good, and internal ‘logic’ of regimes of justification, a project that entails outlining methodically some 13 parameters of analysis for each regime.16 Such detailed attention to cultural contents is in fact all the more noteworthy, at a time when much of sociology of culture chooses to focus on the material and institutional resources or the social-classificatory and stratificatory operation of culture, tending to dismiss specific contents as in any case arbitrary, socially irrelevant, helplessly polysemic or ideologically falsifying.

Given the special place pragmatic sociology assigns to justification by reference to values and conceptions of the common good (‘principes supérieurs communs’), it may also be said to grant privileged attention to moral contents. In this sense, pragmatic sociology may be said to hark back to the sociological tradition of Durkheim, to his conception of sociology as the study of ‘systems of morality’. Pragmatic analysis, however, also allows for a pervasive component of cultural-ideological diversity and flexibility that is rather uncongenial to any classically Durkheimian treatment of morality. Not only does this pluralist and relativizing temper prevent any undue return to overly consensual, functionalist or holistic conceptions, but it even leads pragmatic sociology to adopt what it called a ‘symmetrical’, leveling and detached descriptive approach to all competing regimes of evaluation, as a way of deliberately countering the perennial tendency of individual agents themselves to promote one principle of evaluation against other possible ones.17
Admittedly, such a leveling and relativizing methodological strategy may seem at first to promote a thoroughly unstructured perception of cultural repertoires as just an inchoate supply of equally available cultural resources. Yet countering this seemingly de-structuring thrust, pragmatic sociology's methodical exploration of regimes of justification does posit some very basic structural features. To begin with, tools of justification are not treated in isolation, but as part of broader clusters, regimes of justification, each with its own distinctive internal ‘logic’. The relation between the alternative regimes of justification, moreover, is seen as one of tense coexistence in a state of constant, principled tension and contradiction within one same repertoire, rather than a chaotic or random absence of structure.

But a most original (and to many also most puzzling) feature of pragmatic sociology's scrutiny of cultural structures is its attempt to distinguish, as well as bridge between two very different cultural layers or levels of analysis in the operation of regimes of justification: textual philosophical traditions belonging to what is classically understood as intellectual ‘high’ culture on the one hand, and regimes of justification, i.e. principles of evaluation as used in day-to-day life on the other. Originally, six main regimes of justification, or ‘cités’ – inspirational, domestic, civic, recognitional, industrial, commercial – were identified by Boltanski and Thévenot. While operative only in a fragmentary, unsystematic manner in ordinary life, each regime was also shown to correspond to a distinct, key text of philosophy or political thought (respectively, Augustine, Bossuet, Rousseau, Hobbes, Saint-Simon, Adam Smith), conceived not only as providing a fuller and more systematic articulation of the very same principles, but also as somehow nurturing, shaping the inchoate awareness and common-sensical application in ‘ordinary’ life. Moreover, in their analysis of managerial literature, Boltanski and Thévenot may even be said to scrutinize regimes of justification at what is in fact a third level of cultural articulation, that of a specific professional elite, lying somewhere in between more inchoate, ‘ordinary’ common-sense and more rigorous high-brow philosophies.

The weaknesses and dilemmas of such an approach, at least for those in search of a more rigorous theory of culture, are obvious: what exactly is the basis for such a linkage between ‘high’ and ‘popular’ tools of evaluation when Boltanski and Thévenot themselves make it clear that most ‘ordinary’ actors never even read the texts in question? Do regimes of justification (in either their more philosophical or common-sensical discursive expression) operate, to use Clifford Geertz's famous formulation, as ‘models for’ or ‘models of’ reality? Or even more basically, how precisely does pragmatic sociology conceive the relation between action and justification, or discourse and practice, or as often phrased in other corners of contemporary sociology, culture and agency? And of course, how does it theorize, if at all, the relation of regimes of action and justification to any social or societal structures? On all such scores it must be admitted, pragmatic sociology does remain somewhat enigmatic.

In a more positive vein, however, we shall now see that pragmatic sociology not only displays a sustained interest in the internal contents and structures of
cultural repertoires, but also brings in, or even more precisely, brings back a phenomenological perspective into a field now rather pervaded by structuralist or literary/textual models of cultural analysis.

The Phenomenological Cultural Dimension

Pragmatic sociology's indifference to social differentials and inequalities does not necessarily entail either a naïve acceptance of all statements and modes of justification at face-value or a no less naïve denial of the pervasive importance of material and other individual and group interests. What it rejects, rather, is any form of sweeping reductionism or using Paul Ricoeur's terms, any systematic 'hermeneutic of suspicion' (Ricoeur, 1969). Pragmatic sociology's prime concern with the experience of the social actors themselves, that I find it useful to conceive of pragmatic sociology's systematic exploration of regimes of moral justification and criticism as helping to demarcate a specific domain or level of cultural experience, what Alfred Schütz would have called one more 'finite province of meaning'. It is not incidental that Alfred Schütz needs be invoked in this connection. All throughout its demarcation of regimes of justification and its analysis of the specific ways in which such regimes proceed, pragmatic sociology displays important affinities with Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's famed The Social Construction of Reality (1967) – a work explicitly impregnated with the deep influence of Schütz's phenomenological sociology – perhaps even more important than the oft-mentioned affinities to Garfinkel.

Regimes of justification may thus be seen as co-extant with other domains of meaning already much better explored and identified by sociologists, be it Weber's diverse theodicies and bases of legitimacy; Geertz's famous range of 'cultural systems' (e.g. religion, ideology, common-sense, etc.), or even Goffman's 'interaction order'. In such a perspective, pragmatic sociology needs to be understood as one more link in that important lineage of sociological works that have taken to heart the analytical, sometimes even tediously typological endeavors to
map out the various aspects, levels, or spheres constitutive of culture. Rephrasing this in terms of repertoire theory, specifically, pragmatic sociology has the distinctive merit of attempting to introduce some form of order or structure in cultural ‘tool-kits’ or repertoires that other repertoire theorists have tended to leave largely unstructured or to structure in much rougher, less detailed fashion. In fact, it seems to me to be one of the very few currents of contemporary sociology that even bothers to grapple with this task;²² and engages it, moreover, in a sustained and systematic fashion, elaborating upon a long series of detailed definitions and ideal–typical distinctions of the kind most other sociologists would now shy away from as a style of sociological writing too tedious and obsolete for present tastes.

To some extent, the absence of clear-cut positions with regard to otherwise very central issues in the theory of culture should perhaps be seen as rooted in pragmatic sociology’s relative theoretical modesty. From the very beginning, and I fully concur here with Peter Wagner’s (1999) assessment, its claims were of a rather limited nature. It called for the systematic exploration of an important aspect of social life (namely, the diversity of regimes of action and justification) and consciously criticized specific sociological approaches (Bourdieu in particular), but did not pose itself as a comprehensive alternative to any form of general sociological theory and hence did not obligate itself to providing a key to all major theoretical issues.

Paradoxically, it is perhaps this relative theoretical modesty of pragmatic sociology, paired as it was with a distinctive combination of micro- and macro-analysis from the very beginning that also enabled it to maintain a creative, eclectic openness to other currents and levels of sociological research. In the second part of this article, we shall see how this creative eclecticism has manifested itself in recent writings associated with pragmatic sociology and assisted its current deployment into a highly ambitious and diversified program of historical and comparative macro-cultural research. In the process, it has further expanded its interest in the structural and structuring features of cultural repertoires to the point of developing into a form of cultural sociology that may be hard to contain within the confines of repertoire theory.

The Turn to Historical and Comparative Cultural Analysis

Boltanski and Chiapello’s Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme (LNEC)

Compared with earlier pragmatic writings, Boltanski and Chiapello’s LNEC was quickly acknowledged as not only contributing an ambitious dimension of historical change and development, but also aiming to reconnect the study of power relations to that of regimes of justification (Wagner, 1999: 353). Most significant for our concerns here is the way in which LNEC further expands upon the combination of micro- and macro-levels of cultural analysis that was already a feature of early pragmatic sociology, while also introducing an important
Underscoring capitalism’s perennial need for justification (be it vis-à-vis its own elites or rank-and-file workers), Boltanski and Chiapello examine both criticism and the need for justification as crucial forces in the historical development of modern capitalism. The critical faculties of human beings and their moral need for justification (of themselves and others), as well as the variegated range of ideological forms that such critical and moral competences might give rise to, are thus here once again at the inception and the very heart of the matter. But now they are perceived as interacting in a complex and largely unintended fashion with extant economic, social and ideological structures which they both shape and are shaped by.

In this perspective, LNEC can be situated directly within a long lineage of macro-sociological, and even more specifically, macro-cultural analyses and critiques of capitalistic structures. As is evident from the very title of their work, Boltanski and Chiapello self-consciously elaborate upon, if also modify, Weber’s classic ideas on the ‘spirit’ of capitalism – ideas that have been of crucial importance in the history of sociology in general and macro cultural sociology in particular. Disconnecting it from the specific ideological contents that Weber had attached to it, they broaden the idea of a spirit of capitalism to become ‘the ideology that justifies engaging in capitalism’, (1999: 43), thus also implying that there may be diverse, and historically changing, ideological modes of mobilizing people and convincing them to take an active part in a system that is fundamentally in perennial need for legitimacy. And clearly in line with one of the central features of early pragmatic sociology, they wish to include not only individual motifs and justifications, but also – building upon Albert O. Hirschmann’s important work on pro- and anti-capitalistic arguments (Hirschmann, 1977; 1986) – more general justifications in terms of capitalism’s contribution to a common good.

In that same classic mode, LNEC combines the reworking of Weberian motifs with a dialectical analytic thrust, and a basic interest in promoting further a critique of capitalism strongly resonating with Marxist inspiration. Specifically, LNEC traces the sequential development of at least three different ‘spirits’, or modes of justification in the history of modern capitalism, a history which it pictures as propelled at least in part, precisely by the dynamics of criticism and its dialectical relation to modes of justification. Not only did different phases of capitalism, each with its own defining ‘spirit’ and system of justification, engender different types of critiques, but critique itself played a role in inducing transformations within capitalism. Briefly, critiques of the personalized and irrational aspects of early capitalist entrepreneurship (the first ‘spirit’ of capitalism) contributed to the establishment of more rational-bureaucratic forms of corporate organization (the second ‘spirit’ of capitalism), which in turn engendered criticisms of overly rigid and authoritarian tendencies. This contributed in turn to the establishment of newer, more flexible ‘network’ patterns of economic action and organization – a third spirit of capitalism in formation. Currently
evolving its own ‘project’-based mode of justification, the third phase is thus still awaiting a new wave of criticism (one which LNEC sees itself promoting and articulating) at a time when previous critiques of capitalism have been weakened, paradoxically, as a result of their absorption by capitalism itself. Contributing to this insidious state of affairs, one needs underscore the role assigned to the extensive diffusion of the new ‘spirit of capitalism’ or capitalist ideology among not only a small elite of managers, but also the mass of workers and even society at large (see especially Chapters 4 and 5) – an argument again in line with both Marx and Weber.25

In a much less classical vein though, LNEC also imports elements of what has been addressed here as ‘repertoire theory’ into its macro-cultural analysis of capitalism. In particular, neither criticism nor justification form a unified, monolithic world of discourse. On the contrary, we are presented with a diversified repertoire of criticism, distinct from if also dialectically related to capitalism’s evolving repertoire of justifications as we have seen. One major distinction, for example, demarcates critiques that focus on the existentially alienating aspects of the economy (‘artistic’ critiques), from those that focus on its damaging consequences for social justice and solidarity (‘social’ critiques). Another, related distinction is drawn between modes of justification that focus on the existentially challenging, exciting aspects of economic action as opposed to those that stress its contribution to personal instrumental security and well-being, or in yet another variant, its contribution to some form of public good (such as ‘progress’). And adding an entire range of ideological tensions and dilemmas, the various forms of critiques and justification neither reinforce each other smoothly nor even appear compatible with each other, thus inducing one type of argumentation to become understated or even submerged when a contrary one gathers impetus.

In line perhaps with the modest spirit of empirical and theoretical self-limitation, the argument of the book does not claim to be a full-fledged analysis of capitalism as a whole, but is confined in the main precisely to discursive/ideological formations. LNEC thus does not much help clarify the relation either between discourse and ‘actual’ social action (now sometimes rephrased as discursive and other practices), or between discourse and other social as well as cultural structures (other than those of capitalism itself). Consequently, it tends to reproduce two major limitations already found to be characteristic, as noted, not only of the bulk of pragmatic research from early on, but also of research on cultural repertoires more generally.

Which conditions influence the impact of criticism in specific historical contexts (and I would add, the very emergence and mode of such expression) is thus a question left largely unaddressed as Boltanski and Chiapello themselves acknowledge. If only in light of the importance they attribute to the upheaval of May 1968 and its aftermath, they certainly do not mean to deny that cultural and political developments in society at large may powerfully influence patterns of legitimization or criticism. In fact, they readily acknowledge ‘the heavy impact that traditions and national political conjunctures continue to have in orienting
economic practices and the ideological forms of expression that accompany them', even to the point where the categories they fashioned out of French materials might become perhaps 'inadequate when brought to other parts of the world' (1999: 36).26

These remarks are important here because they make explicit the assumption of a two-tiered structure of cultural repertoires that distinguishes between criteria of justification and national cultural traditions, and even endows the latter with the power to shape the former. Significantly for us, this two-tiered structure is very similar to the one operative in Lamont's research on symbolic boundaries and national cultural repertoires and emerging once again, if now burdened with new analytical uncertainties, as we shall see, in Thévenot and Lamont's collaborative RCCS, comparing repertoires of evaluation in France and the United States (2000).

Thévenot and Lamont, Rethinking Comparative Cultural Sociology (RCCS)

Tellingly entitled Rethinking Comparative Cultural Sociology, this volume confirms and further expands upon the macro-cultural thrust that was already a distinctive feature of early pragmatic sociology while adding to it a systematic comparative dimension. But it is also an important landmark for our purposes in that it now makes fully explicit the affinities of pragmatic sociology with what was identified here as an emerging body of repertoire theory.

Thévenot and Lamont join forces in this project in developing the concept of 'national cultural repertoires of evaluation'. The aim is to point to 'cultural tools' (sometimes also addressed as 'schemas' or 'elementary grammar') that are unevenly available across situations and national contexts.27 In basic fit with Giddens's processual and dialectical theory of structuration (Giddens, 1984), or even better, with the more culturally-oriented reformulation of that approach proposed by William Sewell (1992), these tools or schemas of evaluation are also deemed 'to be available across situations and to pre-exist individuals, although also transformed and made salient by individuals' (Thévenot and Lamont, 2000: 5–6).

Gathering detailed case studies dealing with a number of hot, conflictual areas generating intense passion or disagreement in each country - racism, sexual harassment, criteria for proper journalism, publishing policies, environmental issues - the idea is to try to tap the full range of principles of evaluation used in each national context. RCCS thus clearly pursues pragmatic sociology's exploration of repertoires of justification and detailed concern with the content of criteria or principles of justification used to draw a line between what is of greater or lesser value. And it also pursues its search for some form of internal structure by exploring the tendency of different criteria to compete or cluster, that is, to be used in conjunction with one another, as was already done both in Lamont's other works (e.g. Lamont, 1992; 1999; 2000) and in Boltanski and Chiapello's analysis of the tension and interaction between various types of justification and critiques of capitalism.
Compared with previous research by the same authors, the more important and innovative feature of this combined project is perhaps the application of the notion of national cultural repertoires and of criteria of justification to issues of multiculturalism and political pluralism as well as to a wide range of other conflicts in the public sphere rather than only the sphere of workaday life and private opinions or social interactions. This focus on public conflicts is of course very much in line with the original focus of pragmatic sociology on situations of dispute, in which the level of explicit articulation and need for justification are heightened by the confrontation of conflicting stances. But it also happens to converge with at least two other currents of contemporary cultural analysis with which I find it useful to draw a brief comparison.

Swidler's seminal tool-kit statement is once again significant here, since she draws a major distinction between the way culture operates in relatively routine, 'settled' settings and situations of change or 'unsettledness' which tend to promote a flurry of articulation and temporary public saliency of ideologies that otherwise remain tacit and even largely irrelevant in more settled situations (Swidler, 1986). In a very different vein, Jeffrey Alexander also drew systematic attention to situations of crisis or public scandals (e.g Watergate, the contra-Iran affair, etc.). Rather than pointing to an essentially different mode of operation of culture, however, such situations mainly provide him with a heuristic opportunity to better observe in dramatized and intensified form what are otherwise more latent but nevertheless deeply influential and constant cultural codes (Alexander, 1988; Alexander and Smith, 1990), thus also buttressing his more general, steady theoretical stress on the autonomy, internal structure and shaping power of culture.

Because of its adhesion to the notion of cultural 'tools' and repertoires, RCCS may seem at first to be theoretically closer to Swidler's overall approach. Yet because of its interest in uncovering national preferences that reproduce themselves across a wide variety of public issues and disputes, acquire a certain constancy and are deeply rather than fleetingly influential, RCCS tends in fact to come much closer, both theoretically and empirically, to Alexander's position.

The issue here is a more general and theoretical one, pointing perhaps to the limits, or at least the internal dilemmas facing repertoire theory. To the extent that it tends to endow cultural repertoires, or at the very least some areas or levels within them, with significant steadiness and structure, research on national cultural repertoires is uncongenial to any perception of cultural repertoires as fluid and largely unstructured entities. And to the extent that it also attributes a rather widespread, recurrent and lasting influence to the national cultural structures it has contributed to uncover, RCCS also tends to contradict that important strand of repertoire theory that approaches culture, as it were, as a 'passive' reservoir of available cultural resources or tools, and that stops shy of granting them any overly autonomous shaping or constitutive impact, which it sees as associated with obsolete forms of functionalism or cultural essentialism.

More than pragmatic sociology in its earlier stages or even LNEC, RCCS's comparative exploration of national cultural repertoires of evaluation thus
emerges as a contribution to cultural sociology (a term I shall soon clarify) that paradoxically threatens to overflow the limits of repertoire theory at the very moment that it seems to reassert it. Dealing with criteria for academic and literary evaluations, norms and policies in the publishing industry, or even proper journalism, several of the case-studies offered in RCCS are important contributions to the sociology of culture in the more restricted sense of the term, i.e. that form of sociological research targeting culture as the distinctive realm of explicit and formalized production of symbolic goods. All throughout, however, the intent is to further a general cultural sociological approach applicable to all realms of social life, rather than a more narrow sociology of culture focusing on culture as a distinctive realm of symbolic production and expression. It is also an eminently cultural sociological approach to the extent that it not only allows, but even actively argues for the shaping impact of cultural criteria of evaluation upon ‘actual’ action (rather than only the justification of action), and does so in a clearer and more explicit fashion than any previous phases of pragmatic research.

This willingness to endow cultural criteria of evaluation and even more broadly, other important elements of cultural ‘grammar’ with a powerful shaping, even generative impact on action is perhaps most clearly evidenced in Michael Moody and Laurent Thévenot’s study of environmental disputes. Not only do they address ‘public involvement and justification as part of a larger sequence of actions, some of which involve instrumental or strategic decisions’, but they also admit to taking the “crucial” next step of comparing how models for the connection of particular interests with the public good... are manifested in the creation of organizational arrangements such as “coalitions” or “collectives” (Thévenot and Lamont, 2000: 277), which they also analyze as ‘significant manifestations of underlying cultural models and political grammars’ (Thévenot and Lamont, 2000: 300; italics mine). A similarly ‘strong’ cultural sociological thrust also emerges from their comparison of American versus French environmental disputes (Thévenot and Lamont, 2000: 273–306), in which the very extent to which individual private interests or interest groups are seen as influencing the political process and choices in the public arena is shown to form a vastly influential cultural construction that varies considerably across national and institutional contexts – a step to be seen, not incidentally, as yet again undermining the validity of a universally applicable ‘hermeneutic of suspicion’.

In ways that I cannot develop here in greater detail, the alliance forged between Thévenot’s pragmatic sociology and Lamont’s own approach to the comparative study of criteria of symbolic distinctions could be shown to display some significant theoretical fault lines. Most directly relevant to our interest in the internal structure of cultural repertoires, the six regimes of justification and the basic three regimes of action originally identified by pragmatic research are not integrated in the various case studies or combined in a systematic manner with Lamont’s own very different categories of analysis as she herself in fact underscores (Thévenot and Lamont, 2000: 50, footnote 8). But an even more critical issue here is the uncertain, shifting analytical relation between boundary criteria and national cultural repertoires. While boundary criteria were influenced by cultural
repertoires of broad religious, intellectual and political traditions in Lamont's *Money, Morals and Manners* (1992), the latter were deemed to influence, precisely, but not to themselves include, or be composed of (as is repeatedly intimated in *RCCS*), specific criteria of symbolic distinction and regimes of evaluation.31

Of course, one could solve this problem by seeing ideological traditions and criteria of distinction and evaluation as distinct levels or aspects of cultural repertoires, thus evoking the sort of two-tiered internal structure that had already appeared in Lamont's earlier study (and which we also saw to be assumed in *LNEC*); or perhaps addressing them as belonging to two different kinds of repertoire altogether; or as was Lamont's earlier preference (in *MMM*), reserving the notion of repertoire for the range of intellectual and religious traditions only, and addressing criteria of distinction and justification as it were, as influenced by, but not a component of that repertoire. Thévenot and Lamont, however, do not address such analytical issues and possibilities, which remain thus to be explored in any further theoretical elaboration of the notion of cultural repertoire.32

Confirming this as yet unclear and undecisive state of affairs, it is yet a fourth option that seems to emerge in Thévenot and Lamont's joint conclusion, where they offer to shift attention to what they now address as the available repertoires of 'forms of sociality' – referring, in their terms, 'to boundary drawing and to the closure of communities of reference that boundaries suppose' – and to the impact of 'national political traditions' (now not addressed as themselves repertoires or aspects of repertoires) on the other.

These new, broader and more political formulations, incidentally, may well presage the possibility of an even more emphatic linkage of pragmatic sociology with not only macro-cultural but also macro-institutional sociological analysis.33 Combining with the other features of *RCCS*'s that we have just noted – namely, its expanded interest in the more heavily structured aspects of cultural repertoires, inclination towards a stronger form of 'cultural sociology', and indecisive stance on the precise analytical relation between cultural repertoires and criteria of evaluation – these newer formulations only enhance our sense of the dilemmas or opportunities that may await any further elaboration of repertoire theory.

**Conclusion**

Pragmatic sociology thus bore important affinities from the very start, as underscored in this article, with what has been identified here as an emerging body of repertoire theory. In such perspective, moreover, it may be said to display a distinctive interest in the internal contents and structure of cultural repertoires, and thereby contribute to the move away from initial conceptions of repertoires as largely chaotic, unstructured supply of available resources. No less distinctively, it also contributes to introduce, or even more precisely, as was explained, reintroduce a phenomenological perspective to the field of cultural analysis, now rather dominated by linguistic and literary/textual models and categories.
Relative to earlier phases of pragmatic sociology, both Boltanski and Chiape-lo's LNEC and Thévenot and Lamont's RCCS were shown to clearly confirm and amplify pragmatic sociology's initial openness to macro-cultural analysis, while also adding to it an ambitious historical and comparative dimension. In the process, they have powerfully consolidated the study of repertoires of justification and criticism as an important contribution to the 'sociology of culture' while also bringing it closer to 'cultural sociology', i.e. to that form of sociology that concerns itself with the shaping or constitutive impact of cultural formations and discursive practices upon other aspects of social life.

This new inclination, however, may prove hard to contain under the umbrella of repertoire theory. It remains to be seen, in particular, whether pragmatic theory will be able to continue developing a variant of repertoire theory capable of conceptualizing cultural effects in a way that allows for the flexibility and pluralism of basic repertoire theory, while also persisting in exploring - be it in phenomenological, structuralist, literary or any other terms of analysis - the tendency of cultural repertoires to develop some form of internally differentiated, pragmatically relevant and socially influential structures.

Many other issues of general importance to cultural sociology - such as the precise relation between regimes of action and justification, culture and action or discursive and other practices, or between the various levels or aspects of repertoires - have still been left unanswered or treated only too marginally and often enigmatically in this dynamic, evolving framework of pragmatic sociology. Moreover, the impact, or interaction of cultural repertoires with other, economic or political macro-societal structures has not yet been taken into account in any significant and systematic fashion. This deflection of attention to material and institutional constraints and macro-structures is perhaps the price paid, hopefully only momentarily, for the cultural turn that has by now permeated - and, to my mind, richly benefited - many fields of sociology as well as other disciplines.

While this was not a central issue here, it is worth noting that the initial contrast with and even active opposition to Bourdieu's approach, in which both the historical and comparative dimensions have remained notoriously weak, has only sharpened. Moreover, if there is one theme that has been constant and even been given increasing theoretical and empirical support, it is the resistance to any exclusive commitment to a hermeneutic of suspicion that would tend to automatically anchor all cultural statements in underlying power differentials and individual or group interests - one of the backbones of Bourdieu's critical sociology.

It would be mistaken though to see the understatement of material and macro-institutional constraints associated with pragmatic sociology, as with most repertoire theory at large, as the symptom of an intrinsic and irremediable lack of 'critical' relevance. After all, practitioners of 'cultural studies' themselves, seldom suspected of a lack of critical animus, now often display the very same silence on material and macro-societal constraints. More fundamentally, there may well be no better aid than the systematic deployment of a comparative cultural perspective - a direction that pragmatic sociology has proved itself to be open to - in
further nurturing the kind of sustained sensitivity to diversity and pluralism, and
the cultivated awareness of ‘the possibility of alternative societal arrangements’
(Calhoun, 1995: xviii) that some have seen as the very heart of the critical stance.
Rather than being seen as the monopoly of a specific, ‘critical’ school or sub-
current of sociology, we should thus see that stance as essential in expanding not
only the horizons of critical theory but also - and why not? - ‘merely’ good and
challenging sociological theory.

Notes

1 For extensive accounts of pragmatic sociology either contrasting it with Bourdieu
specifically, or discussing its downplay of issues of power and inequality and loss of
radical edge more generally, see (albeit from diverse perspectives) Bénatouil (1999a;
1999b); Ricoeur (1995); Wagner (1994; 1999). Pragmatic sociology’s own explicit
critiques of critical sociology contributed to this overriding angle of perception (see,
e.g. Boltanski, 1990: 37–64).
2 Much depends on one’s defining criteria of a critical theoretical stance, as I shall only
allude to very briefly in this article’s conclusion (see also below, note 8).
3 Garfinkel himself, however, would reject any definition of his approach as ‘merely’
micro-sociological, and sees himself as groping for a radically different way of address-
inging both micro- and macro-structures.
4 Six main regimes of justification (also called cités) were mapped out by Boltanski and
The list was not presented as conclusive, and Boltanski and Chiapello have now traced
the emergence of a seventh, ‘project-oriented’ cité in LNEC.
5 This macro-cultural thrust goes beyond just granting complementary validity to the
macro-sociological perspective, as done by some so-called micro-sociologies or soci-
ologies of action that, however, do not see themselves as actively engaging the macro-
dimension. It is also still far more principled and systematic than a converging,
burgeoning tendency in the sociology of accounts to increasingly acknowledge that
accounts need be contextualized and may reflect culturally embedded normative
explanations (Ohrbuch, 1997).
6 Pragmatic sociology though, at least in its earlier formulations, does not operate with
an altogether classically humanist view of human agency and individual autonomy
(Bénatouil, 1999: 297–301). Primacy is given rather to actions or short-term situ-
ations and sequences of action, in which individuals appear as fragmentary bearers of
action (‘actants’ or ‘personnes actantielles’). Even more unsettlingly perhaps, humans
and objects are all put on the same plane. These various strategies, however, are not
a systematic feature of all pragmatic research; they are not reiterated, at any rate, in
Boltanski’s later writings (1993; Boltanski and Thévenot, 1999).
7 Pragmatic writings are not always clear and consistent about the precise relation
between regimes of justification and regimes of action, terms that sometimes seem to
be interchangeable, sometimes not. Be this as it may, the typology of regimes of action
entails a concern with the social contexts in which regimes of justification may or may
not be deployed, that is absent by and large not only in ethnomethodology but also
in most other sociologies of ‘accounts’.
8 As such, one may add, it may be deemed profoundly inimical not only to ‘older’,

Ilana Friedrich  Silber Pragmatic Sociology as Cultural Sociology
Marxian forms of critical theory giving privileged attention to classes but also to the newer, postmodern 'politics of identity', themselves already blamed for contributing to obfuscate the 'older', socio-economic bases of inequality.

9 It is not self-understood, however, that all critical theory needs be collectivistic. Critical theory in the style of the Frankfurt School, in fact, can hardly be credited with such a clearly 'collectivistic' anchor. Nor is it characteristic of later brands of critical theory or even a necessary, core ingredient of what a critical-theoretical stance is about (see e.g. Calhoun, 1995: 35-6 especially).

10 See above, note 5, although Ohrbuch does not address the same literature.

11 The reference here is to Anthony Giddens's influential idea of the duality of structures, as both the medium and outcome of the practices that constitute social systems (Giddens, 1984). Revising this approach and giving it a cultural twist, William H. Sewell sees structures as constituted by mutually sustaining cultural schemas and sets of resources that empower and constrain social action and tend to be reproduced by that action (Sewell, 1992).

12 The influence of Geertz's notion of culture as a set of public texts is at times explicitly underlined in this regard, if also combined with a loose reference to Foucauldian notions of discourse, or discursive practices.

13 This accent on of practice and action was already apparent in Charles Tilly's influential historical sociological work on repertoires of collective violence, where it had yet no explicit connection to cultural analysis (Tilly, 1979).

14 For a fuller discussion of the idea of repertoire and its variants, see Silber (2001).

15 Swidler gives now special weight to the structuring power of institutions and 'anchoring social practices' (Swidler, 2001a; 2001b), i.e. locating thus sources of structuration, as it were, without rather than within cultural repertoires.

16 This entails, for example, outlining a regime's conception of the state of being associated with 'greatness'; common human dignity; relevant subjects; objects; apparatus; tests; economy of resources; natural relations between beings, etc. One may question, of course, whether the specific moral/philosophical contents entailed would be applicable beyond the French context – an issue which as we shall later see RCCS has only started to tackle.

17 This has been criticized by Ricoeur, for one, as an overly levelling discussion of the 'political' in particular as belonging to only one (so-called 'civic') among possible regimes (Ricoeur, 1995).

18 Ricoeur mainly applied this idea (in French, 'l'interprétation du soupçon') to his discussion of psychoanalysis, but I apply it to Boltanski and Thévenot's resistance to, and relativization of any systematically debunking, suspicious sociological stance (in posed contrast, of course, to Bourdieu). Boltanski and Thévenot explicitly refer to Ricoeur's notion in their discussion of obstacles that generalizing and universalizing claims face in achieving legitimacy and justification (1991: 56).

19 In line with the Maussian tradition of reflection on gift-processes – of which Boltanski at least is clearly aware (Boltanski, 1990: 213–21) – pragmatic sociology would in fact rather grant that interestedness and disinterestedness have a way of often inextricably intertwining.

20 Thévenot, admittedly, has expressed opposition to sociological 'constructivism', in contrast to which he stresses that pragmatic sociology gives heavy weight to actual reality in the environment 'out there' and the diverse modes of agency, diverse ways in which individuals engage, or take hold of, that reality (2001: 59). Although Berger and Luckmann are often misinterpreted (due to the famous title of their book more
than its actual contents) as having fathered all sociological constructivism, they do not in fact promote a type of constructivism that would basically deny 'reality' in that sense.

21 The 'deeper' binary codes of Lévi-Strauss's symbolic-structuralism are also crucial here. Because they refer to more deeply unconscious symbolic structures that are not subjectively experienced as 'meaningful' by actors, however, I would not place them within the precise same, theoretical lineage.

22 From a very different perspective, focusing on codes, narratives and public performance, see mainly the 'neo-Durkheimian', 'strong' cultural sociology developed by Jeffrey Alexander and related work by Philip Smith and a group of associated students and collaborators (e.g. Alexander, 1988; Alexander and Smith, 1990; Kane, 1991). See also neo-institutionalist work on 'institutional logics' (Friedland and Alford, 1991); and DiMaggio's ideas on 'thematization' and levels in the 'architecture of culture' (DiMaggio, 1997).

23 In relation to Boltanski's earlier work with Thévenot, the cultural contents or regimes of evaluation explored in LNEC may thus seem to have less general and supra-situational potential relevance, precisely because they are harnessed to the justification or criticism of capitalism specifically, and in close correspondence to specific historical phases in the latter's historical development.

24 For Weber, the spirit of modern capitalism referred, quite specifically, to the relentless and rationally organized acquisition of wealth seen as an end in itself, i.e. as a calling, to be fulfilled in a dutiful and efficient fashion as part of one's commitment to work and professional vocation (Weber, [1905] 1992: 47-78 especially). Boltanski and Chiapello also subsume under the idea of a spirit of capitalism, the whole range of ethical motifs that may be enlisted by that ideology (and which Weber would have rather confined, analytically, to the Protestant 'ethic' that had unwittingly contributed to the formation of that spirit of modern capitalism).

25 This is in clear continuity with Marx's denunciation of capitalist ideology as not only serving the short-term interests of the ruling classes but also imposing its delusive and alienating grip on both bourgeois capitalists and workers - the stance that was later to receive further elaboration in neo-Marxist and Gramscian critiques of capitalism as 'dominant ideology' (see Abercrombie et al., 1980). But it also echoes Weber's conception of the spirit of modern capitalism as a 'mass phenomenon' (Weber, [1905] 1992: 57), not confined to entrepreneurs but reaching across diverse groups, classes and sectors (see also Otsuka, 1976; Ghosh, 1995).

26 Confirming pragmatic sociology's phenomenological and cultural interpretative dimensions, they connect this national focus to a better chance of successfully applying the pragmatic approach and taking into account 'the meaning that people give to their actions': 'les façons dont les personnes s'engagent dans l'action, leurs justifications et le sens qu'elles donnent à leurs actes' (Boltanski and Chiapello, 1999: 36; my emphasis).

27 This shifting terminology is perhaps indicative of an indecisive stance towards the instrumentalist connotations of the tool-kit metaphor, mixed as it is here with a vocabulary rather rooted in linguistic and literary models of cultural analysis itself. As will be further explained below, this semantic indecision may well reflect a more essential theoretical dilemma.

28 This distinction between cultural sociology and the sociology of culture is not, or not yet, a common, fully accepted usage. It does not exactly overlap, moreover, with the closely similar distinction by Alexander and Smith (1998), for whom a sociology of
culture focuses on explaining culture by something else, in contrast to cultural sociology which stresses culture as pervasively explanatory rather than explanandum; nor Edles (2002: 12–16), distinguishing between sociologist of culture as those who focus on the processes behind the production of cultural objects, and cultural sociologists as 'those who focus on the content and meaning of cultural objects themselves'. In the perspective preferred here, both may well be rather sociologists of culture; and a focus on the cultural objects themselves does not necessarily imply addressing culture as a constitutive dimension of all spheres of social life (the cultural sociological emphasis as defined here).

29 For example, all of Lamont's major works may be said to explore the individual's differential, socially structured access to and use of diverse criteria of evaluation as a function of his overall positioning within conventional class and race categories – issues systematically by-stepped (if not denied) by pragmatic sociology.

30 See her earlier distinction between economic, moral or cultural criteria of distinction (Lamont, 1992) or the relative preponderance of cultural, biological, or market arguments in issues that have to do with racism and anti-racism (Thévenot and Lamont, 2000: 25–55; Lamont, 1999: 127–50).

31 Lamont's earlier stance is in fact clearly reiterated in her chapter on racism and anti-racism: 'national differences in the relative salience of various types of arguments can be accounted by elements of cultural repertoires available in the two countries' (Thévenot and Lamont, 2000: 46).

32 For a more detailed exploration of these issues, see Silber (2001).

33 Beyond a few dispersed remarks on the way in which structural conditions in general (be they economic, social, political or cultural) influence the use of diverse criteria of distinction and evaluation, RCCS explicitly chose not to address the macro-institutional dimension, thus also interrupting the strategy of multidimensional macro-structural inquiry systematically promoted by Lamont in previous works.

34 Even in that relatively narrower sense, the sociology of culture may include studies that target not only explicit symbolic products, but also taken-for-granted assumptions or forms of expression – as long as they are addressed as a distinct, (rather than all pervasive and influential) realm of social life.

References


Ilana Friedrich  Silber  Pragmatic Sociology as Cultural Sociology 447


Tilly, Charles (1979) ‘Repertoires of Contention in America and Britain 1750–1830’, in
Ilana Friedrich  Silber  Pragmatic Sociology as Cultural Sociology


Ilana Friedrich Silber  is Senior Lecturer at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and the Graduate Program for Interdisciplinary Studies in Hermeneutics at Bar-Ilan University, Israel. Her major fields of interest are the sociology of religion and culture, comparative historical sociology, sociological theory, and the sociology of gift-giving and philanthropy. Her publications include: Virtuosity, Charisma and Social Order: A Comparative Sociological Study of Monasticism in Theravada Buddhism and Medieval Catholicism (Cambridge University Press, 1995); ‘Space, Fields, Boundaries: The Rise of Spatial Metaphors in Contemporary Sociological Theory’, Social Research 62(2) (1995); ‘Beyond Purity and Danger: Gift-Giving in the Monotheistic Religions’, in T. Vandevelde (ed.) Gifts and Interests (Peeters, 2000); and ‘The Gift-Relationship in an Era of “Loose” Solidarities’, in E. Ben-Rafael (ed.) Identity, Culture and Globalization (Brill Academic Publishers, 2001). Address: Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Bar-Ilan University, 52900 Ramat-Gan, Israel. [email: ifsilber@mail.biu.ac.il]